

RAZORCAKE



SMALLTOWN

VON IVA
ULTRAMAN

ALICE BAG

BASEBALL FURIES
PUNK IN MOVIES

ISSUE #24 \$4

RAZORCAKE

As we were wrapping up this issue, things started to weigh kinda heavy on me. Things like getting everything done in the magazine, sure, but that's a pressure that I like. I like doing the magazine. On top of this, though, I work a couple of jobs to pay the bills. Those jobs aren't a pressure I like so much. And those second and third job hassles were weighing me down. Like most of you who read this zine, I did what I usually do when things get heavy. I put on an album that I really love. Let the guitars and drums blend together, fill my head, help me deal with shit. So I popped on *The First Three Years* by Smalltown—this issue's cover band. It's a great album for times like this. Within two songs I was singing along and not worrying so much about shit and thinking more about the music. And the ironic thing is, the song that made me feel better was Smalltown's cover of the Newtown Neurotics song, "What Are You Gonna Do When the Oil Runs Out." It's ironic that I was simultaneously feeling better and thinking about the lyrics of the song, which are admittedly dismal. What are we gonna do when the oil runs out? Are we prepared for such a drastic change of lifestyle? Shit, man, I don't know. It's something else to think about, though. Something besides my job and my bills and all the pedestrian crap of day-to-day life.

Beyond music, there are some writers who are always great to turn to when things get heavy. One of my favorites is Nelson Algren. Lately, I've been reading one of his early novels. I get all wrapped up in the characters. I love some of them. I hate some of them. I root for some of them and I hope that some of them get what they deserve. But here's the thing: I know the ones who I'm rooting for are going to lose. I know that the bastards of the book will come out on top. Algren gives me enough hope to keep reading, but believe me, I've read enough books by Nelson Algren to know how this one ends. And though the words of this novel are pretty dismal, they still make me feel better. Though the characters are poor and fucked and doomed from the second

they crawl out of the womb, reading about their lives cheers me up.

Sometimes I wonder if I'm alone in this. I'll see Hollywood movies and television shows that always have happy endings. Things always work out in thirty minutes, or an hour, or two hours. You can set your watch by it. Everything's fucked two-thirds of the way through the movie or TV show. Everything works out in the end. It's vacuous. It bugs the hell out of me.

It's not that I don't like happy endings. I love it when things do work out. I love it when the people I'm rooting for win and the bastards get what they deserve. Happy endings only bug me when you know they're contrived. I hate it when I have to forget everything I know about life to accept the story's happily ever after. That's no escape for me. I can never completely forget that the bastards usually do win, that the biggest assholes in this country run this country. I can't completely forget that a small minority of wealthy people take the lion's share of the profit off of all our labor. I can't completely forget that I work three jobs and can't afford to go to the doctor when I'm sick. I can't completely forget that the oil likely will run out during our lifetimes and that the people who Algren based his characters on are still alive, still poor, still doomed. I don't spend too much time dwelling on these things. I just keep them in the back of my mind.

That's why I appreciate bands like Smalltown and writers like Algren: they don't dwell on the worst parts of our society, but the worst parts of society are part of the story. They sing and write about the world as they see it, warts and all. It's honest. It's real. It gives me strength to push off the things that weigh me down. That's also why I love spending so much time on this little magazine: we can take the good with the bad. Some of this stuff may be ugly, but no one's trying to bullshit you just to make you feel better. And still, I hope you read this and feel better in the end.

—Sean

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FOR ISSUE #25

February 1st, 2005

ISSUE #25

April 1st, 2005

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White Suburban Youth
(1984 - Members went on to be Ultraman, photo by Mark Blade)

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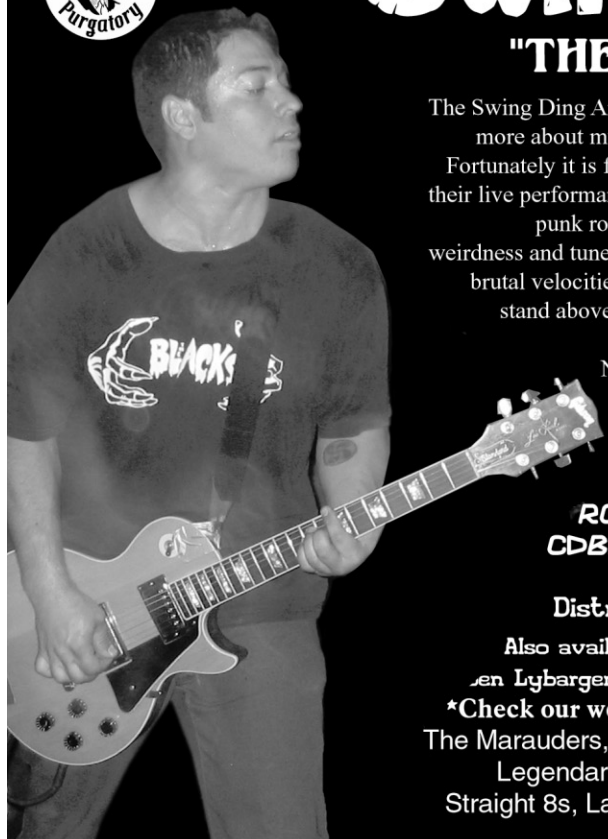
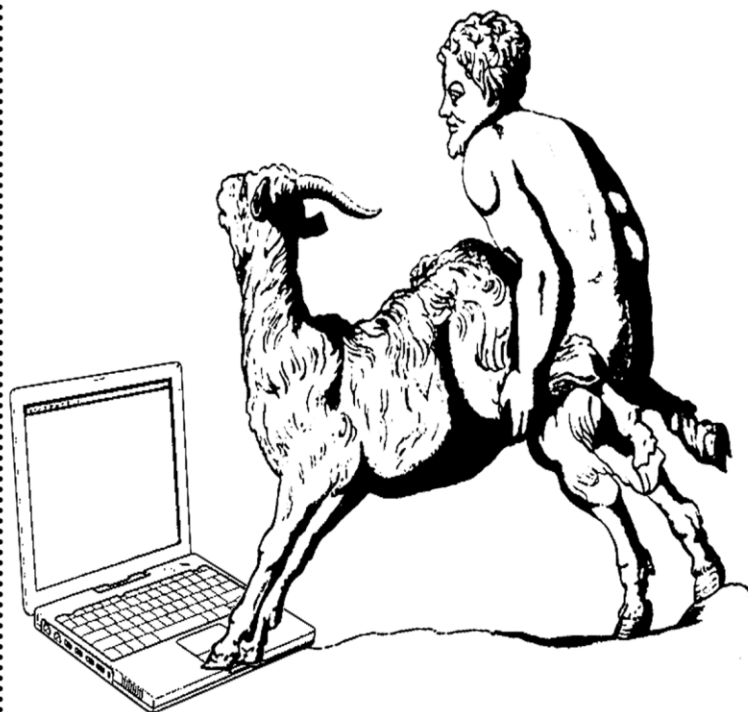
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Individual opinions expressed within are not necessarily those of Razorcake/Gorsky, Inc.

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THE DINGHOLE REPORTS

The Dinghole Reports
By the Rhythm Chicken
(Commentary by Francis Funyuns)
[Edited by Dr. Sicnarf]

What IS punk rock? Listen here, slick-slack! Don't come crying to me for the answer! Right now, my answer would be that punk rock is sitting next to the road drinking beer and having a guy driving a big food distributor truck pull over and give you meat. About a month ago I would've told you punk rock is creating your own Halloween parade-of-one through a small Midwestern town in late October snow flurries.

[So, it seems to me that whatever YOU are doing is your own definition of punk rock. Is that the case Mr. Chicken? – Dr. S.]

(Yeah, Chicken. Who died and made YOU the punk rock grand poobah? – F.F.)

So, in early October we started putting out the signs by the road. *NOV. 2 VOTE! THEN JOIN OUR ELECTION DAY ROADSIT! BE AMERICAN, VOTE AND SIT! FREE BRATS AND BLATZ FOR VOTERS!* There were also plenty of punkvoter.com yard signs and posters along the road. We advertised for the whole month leading up to Election Day. October was quite a cold, rainy, and sometimes snowy month in Sister Bay, Wisconsin. Every three or four days I had to go out and fix the weathered signs with more coat hangers and duct tape (punk!). Of course, yard signs are not enough advertising in our book. The best possible advertising for our Election Day Roadsit were the actual roadsits leading up to the big one. Ruckus Thomas and I were out there braving the wind, rain, and snow, hoisting our beers to passing traffic, true pioneers in patriotism!

RHYTHM CHICKEN

Then came Fall Fest, the largest, most anticipated festival in all of Door County. Thousands of tourists fill the tiny town of Sister Bay to buy crappy arts and crafts, gawk in stupefied wonder at the peak of autumn colors, and stagger around drunk from the VFW bratwurst stand to the Lions Club bratwurst stand to the American Legion bratwurst stand to the Jaycees bratwurst stand. Then there's all the church bratwurst stands and tavern bratwurst stands. This ain't no vegan weenie roast! The best part of Fall Fest is the Saturday morning parade. It gives all the morning drunks something to yell at without scaring the kids. For the first time, I was living

in Door County and working at a

place that not only allowed me the time off to be in the parade, but sponsored the Rhythm Chicken's float as well! Three clucks for Mike and Mary Mead at the Shoreline Restaurant! CLUCK! CLUCK! CLUCK!

Dinghole Report #61: The Rhythm Chicken Clucks You to Vote! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #326)

Building a Rhythm Chicken parade float is pretty easy. Simply get your hands on an old



pickup truck, cover it with stupid, hastily drawn-up signs and posters, put the ol' RC in the back, and let the ruckus roll through the streets. Ruckus Thomas and I took advantage of this particular parade appearance to spread the word for our Election Day Roadsit. We plastered his old truck with punkvoter.com signs along with our own homemade ones. *THE RHYTHM CHICKEN CLUCKS YOU TO VOTE! AFTER YOU VOTE JOIN OUR ROADSIT ON OLD STAGE RD.! THIS AIN'T FLORIDA, YOUR VOTE COUNTS! IMPEACH THE RALLY RABBIT!* We lined up at the parade's starting gate and started getting awkward looks from the other more innocent floats. Two floats ahead of us there was some type of girl scout float with a

bunch of little uniformed girls singing campfire songs. W.W.T.D.? I decided it was necessary to do a short "sound check" and beat the chicken skins for a short while. One little girl yelled back at me, "Just CUT IT OUT!" We sent our friend Kim the Man up to the nearest tavern to pick up some bloody marys to keep us warm. Just before we inched into the parade, the snow flurries started. God, I love Wisconsin! Ruckus Thomas was driving the float with his trusty dog, Hojon, in the passenger seat. I was starting the opening drum roll in the back. Kim the Man was walking along side our float handing out punkvoter.com literature to the crowds. The parade starts at the intersection in front of Husby's Tavern, where hundreds of tourists and drunks are gathered around to eat brats, drink, and yell. Ruckus Thomas inches out into the intersection and halts the truck. I poured my audio chaos on the crowd and THEY ATE IT UP! I pulled out my terrible twigs, the ruckus logs. They roared! I gave them a hardy dose of ruckus log rhythm and the cheers were deafening. This intersection is also where most of the locals gather to drink and yell. The rest of the parade route is mostly tourists, wealthy Chicago tourists with their Bush/Cheney buttons and stickers. Ruckus Thomas enjoyed seeing their faces sour as we drew near. Stone-faced republicans wouldn't even crack a smile while their kids were cheering frantically! THIS is my punk. Kim the Man would attempt to hand them punkvoter.com flyers and they wouldn't even acknowledge her! Luckily there were plenty of democrats (you know, FUN people!) who yelled their hearts out and cheered the Chicken on. We rode past the town park where the huge arts and crafts fair was being held. Thomas halted again. I played a wild and powerful set as the cold turned my thumbs into two numb and almost useless stubs. I

stopped and raised my wings to the sky. The crowd cheered for a while and then died down as I was feeling around the truck bed for my ruckus logs. Then a few feet away at roadside was Dave, our bartender buddy from JJ's La Puerta. He took advantage of the lull to holler out, "Hey Hojon!" Hojon got excited and yelped back from the passenger seat. He's a star!

Dinghole Report #62: RC Tackles the Taverns!

(Rhythm Chicken sightings #328 & #328)

Later that evening, Ruckus Thomas and Kim the Man joined me to downtown Sister Bay to see what kind of drunken chaos was going down. Inside Husby's, the place was totally

packed with drunks yelling at the Badger game on TV. The bar manager caught sight of us and started his constant requests for a Chicken gig in the bar. I mulled it over awhile. The place was horribly packed already, but they were drunk and wild. I gave the guy my conditions. First, I would play only behind the bar. Second, I would demand as payment one tall cool pint of beer. They agreed and we ran home to get the Chicken kit. After effectively driving over my longtime Chicken drum throne (don't ask) Ruckus Thomas suggests an old pickle bucket lying

mere two days away and we felt a little extra advertising was necessary. Who needs the town hall to tell you when you can and can't have a parade? Who needs crowds of people along the road make a parade a parade? We chuckle at the punkness of it all and head back downtown with my kit in the back and Hojon in the front again. We set up near Husby's and slowly started pulling out onto the "parade route." A few early morning drinkers screamed out of Husby's. A few cars started slowing down behind us and honking. There were maybe six or seven normal

one." While sitting out by the road and hoisting my beer to passing cars, I smiled and began fantasizing of what the next day would bring: the first ever all-day roadsit, the consumption of numerous brats and rhythm chili, the soaking of gallons and gallons of Blatz at roadside, and ultimately the dethroning of that quiver-lipped weasel Bush. Just then a car pulls in with Illinois plates. An older gentleman steps out and hands me a case of Miller Lite. "This is for your party tomorrow. I gotta go down to Chicago to vote, but have fun!" Odd, but encouraging!

There's nothing worse than watching Bush getting re-elected with a hangover!

around the property. Bingo! We haul the kit back to Husby's and set up behind the bar. They turn down the sound from the game as the crowd gives out a collective, "What the...?" Then began the audio hurricane. Every head turned to the bar as faces squeezed in to catch a glimpse. I pounded out a mighty set of Chicken-ass monster rock! Beer filled the air! There was a blinding lightning of relentless camera flashes! They remembered their Rhythm Chicken from the parade that morning and now they had an entire day of drinking under their belts! They just frickin' exploded! I pulled out the ruckus logs to their gasps and cheers. I pushed them to the limit and ended it all with a victorious dive onto my drums, flattening them and detonating the bomb that was the drunken crowd. Tom and Kim helped me throw the kit into my car and we went back to claim the prize, that tall cool beer. The guy hands me a can of Pabst. I am most unimpressed with their lack of Blatz. Ten minutes later, we are driving to the north end of Sister Bay to JJ's La Puerta where the Blatz on tap flows like Blatz! Like a mutant Fall Fest caroler, I set up my kit on the front porch to the tavern and begin my offering of ruckus. The door swings open as the front windows fill with smiling faces. Various tourists have their photos taken with my wild local ass. I continue assaulting the Fest-goers with my chicken rhythms and they just eat it up. A few minutes later, we are up at the bar and Dave hands me a tall cool pint of Blatz. It wasn't in my rider, but Dave knows what I like! He then says, "I saw Hojon in the parade today!"

Dinghole Report #63: A Halloween Parade-of-One! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #329)

Two weeks later, I'm enjoying my first unemployed Sunday morning. Then Ruckus Thomas and I glance out the window of his white trash trailer and see his truck out front, still plastered with parade signs and punkvoter.com posters. The Election Day Roadsit was a



pedestrians walking the streets and they just scratched their heads in wonder. Then we saw a group of five high school kids carrying John Kerry signs and chanting at passing cars. They cheered us on and started dancing. A few business owners came out and waved, thinking that we REALLY missed the parade! THIS is my punk. It was all over too soon. We pulled over at the parade route's end in a very quiet little town and I told Tom we needed to do it again. We retraced the parade route end to finish to more puzzled looks and a few cheers and honks. It didn't occur to me till later that it was Halloween and that might have added to their confusion. Later that day, I created the largest batch EVER of Rhythm Chili. Kristin brought by the gallons of bloody mary mix and Tom went to pick up the multiple cases of bratwursts and multiple half-barrels of Blatz. We were getting ready for the BIG ONE!

Monday was Election Day Roadsit Eve and I was like an over-anxious child! I ran a few errands and fixed up the yard signs one last time. I raked the yard and inventoried the yard furniture. In the early afternoon I ran out preparatory chores and decided it was time for a last minute advertisement, the SOLO-ROADSIT! Ruckus Thomas was still at work, so I put on my winter coat and tapped a large Blatz for a "roadsit-of-

(Come on! On with the roadsit! Bring on the Blatz! Blow out the Bush! - F.F.)

Dinghole Report #64: The Mother of All Roadsits... but only if you vote, FUCKER! (Rhythm Chicken sightings #330 to #342!)

My alarm went off at 6 AM. I sprang out of bed in my woodshed and instantly started singing HAPPY ROADSIT to the melody of the Alleluia Chorus. I threw on my winter duds and stomped over to the trailer, still screaming my mantra. Ruckus Thomas bounced out of his bed, already wearing his long underwear, and joining in song. This was truly our day of days! Tom got the percolator going and I made the last

and final yard signs. *VOTE TODAY! ROADSIT TODAY! NON-VOTERS NON-WELCOME! OFFICIAL EXIT POLL: HONK IF YOU VOTED! I APPROVE OF THIS ROADSIT!* I set up my Rhythm Chicken stage across the driveway with a banner reading *RHYTHM CHICKEN ELECTION RUCKUS!* We were ready! At seven AM, I mounted my pickle bucket throne and pulled on the Chicken head. As the polls opened a quarter mile up our rural road, so did our Election Day Roadsit! I rolled out a patriotic barrel of ruckus and woke the neighbors! I rocked my rock to Tom and Hojon and two passing cars! Not the most chaotic of RC gigs, but conceptually monumental. Then I had to man the roadsit while Tom walked up the road to vote. I sat down with my mug of coffee and Hojon at my side. He, too, was very excited for this day of days and jumped up at me, effectively knocking my coffee onto my lap. After a few "dangs" and "drats," I realized that he was trying to tell me that a roadsit is no place for non-alcoholic beverages! I changed my pants and quickly reassumed my post. Soon, Ruckus Thomas came strutting back down the road proudly claiming that he was voter #44 for all of Liberty Grove Township! If he had driven, he probably would've been #11! At eight AM I took my hourly position and the

RHYTHM CHICKEN

Rhythm Chicken supplied another healthy dose of election ruckus for the throbbing crowd of Tom, Hojon, and one passing car. Now it was time for Tom to man the roadsit as I walked up the road to fulfill my patriotic duty. I stood in line right behind Randy the milkman. I was voter #112 for all of Liberty Grove Township. (Yeah, yeah. I'm an integer blocking your way, Norb.) After voting and stomping back down

At 10AM, the Rhythm Chicken had his first real sizable audience, and the rhythm rock rained on the roadsitters as they basked in post-voting bliss. This time Ruckus Thomas answered his cell phone and it was our own Mr. Moose calling from Spokane, Washington! He knew the ruckus would be hourly and wanted to hear it for himself. Another hour, another state! Roadsit guests continued to arrive as Tom start-

concerts every hour to the cheering roadsitters. The 5PM Chicken gig was the first after dark concert, but luckily my cousin pulled his car around and pointed the headlights to the stage. As the hours went by, our roadsit numbers grew and those in attendance grew drunker. Our data collection skills may have become somewhat limited, but science bravely marches forward. Our friend Noelle showed up with a huge batch

One driver slowed down and motioned that his horn didn't work but was trying to punch his steering wheel, thusly creating our own "hanging chad."

Old Stage Road while singing HAPPY ROADSIT, I began to really feel the power of the roadsit in my soul. Kim the Man soon showed up with the vodka and bloody mary garnishes. Tom put the TV out in the front yard so we could keep up with election coverage. I started cooking up the bacon and eggs that we enjoyed at roadside. Bloody marys were hoisted to passing cars for the first few hours. We conducted a very scientific exit poll of our own. The ol' HONK IF YOU VOTED really did the trick!

(What the hell kind of exit poll is THAT? – F.F.)

Well, we contemplated trying a "one honk if you voted for Kerry, two honks if you voted for Bush" type of poll, but you know we would've just counted every Bush honk as two Kerry honks! Then we thought it was scientific enough to just poll if people voted or not. One driver slowed down and motioned that his horn didn't work but was trying to punch his steering wheel, thusly creating our own "hanging chad." Then our pen and notepad data collection device got wet later in the rain and each honk marked down grew blurry and less legible. We figured that our poll had about an 80% degree of error, but what do you expect from a bunch of drunks at the side of the road? By 9AM I finished my breakfast and sat at my Chicken kit for another hourly concert. It was now 7AM in Los Angeles, so we figured it was time to wake up Todd at Razorcake HQ! Tom called LA with his cell phone at stage left and welcomed Todd to the Election Day Roadsit, then held the phone out so Todd could bear audio witness to the Wisconsin election ruckus! So far, this roadsit spanned two hours, two states, and two time zones! Three cars passed. One of them honked and then turned around to join us... our first real Election Day Roadsit guest! More and more roadsit guests started stopping in and our number grew. Every guest was made to sign the guestbook and include their voter number. All these numbers and data were meticulously analyzed by our resident mathematician, Dr. Sicnarf, to give legitimate mathematical credibility to our own home-grown media blitz!

[I did WHAT now? – Dr. S.]



ed up the grill. The 11AM Chicken gig was quite spectacular as Tom placed the grill at stage left and stoked the flames for one hell of a pyrotechnics show! The bratwurst, sizzling flames of hell, really added to the outdoor roadside rock-fest experience. The bloody marys soon gave way to gallons and gallons and gallons of Blatz. The Election Day Roadsit was progressing nicely. More passing cars honked as each one was methodically counted and more voters stopped in to join the roadsit. By noon, the brats were done and soaking in brine and the Rhythm Chili was served! The roadsitters were soon inhaling brats and chili, all washed down with continuous gallons of Blatz. God Bless America. Throughout the day we had more and more roadsitters showed up from outside the county. Some came from Green Bay and even two friends from Milwaukee voted early and drove up to join the monumental roadsit. The parked cars filled our front yard and were lined up down the street. Our lines of chairs at roadside grew three rows deep! Everyone was sitting, drinking, eating, chatting, yelling, and just having a great, fun time. Like Old Faithful, the Rhythm Chicken provided his election ruckus

of red, white, and blue cupcakes... CUP-CAKES! They were devoured. Local newspaper, the *Peninsula Pulse*, was there taking photos and interviewing people. At one point, we suddenly realized that it was raining and wondered how long it had been. The rain mattered little to the drunk roadsitters as Blatz, brats, and rhythm chili were constantly consumed. The Liberty Grove voting poll up the road closed at 8PM, the same time as the Rhythm Chicken's grand finale closing concert. Ruckus Thomas called Todd at Razorcake HQ to transmit the glory of the final ruckus one last time. Todd was appreciative and wished drunken blessings to our roadsit. The roadsit continued for a few more hours while the numbers dwindled and the last guests were given the polite "get outta here." The entire day drinking and feasting at roadside had finally taken its toll and we were soon all out cold.

The first ever Election Day Roadsit had broken many roadsit records. It was the longest roadsit ever (fifteen hours!). It boasted the largest roadsit attendance ever (around eighty to one hundred people). We had the youngest roadsitter (eighteen months!). We consumed the most roadsit beer ever (over 2.5 half-barrels plus numerous bottle and can carry-ins). This was the most Rhythm Chicken gigs in one spot in one day (13!). This was by far the most glorious roadsit to date... and then Bush "won." Crap.

[Well, you certainly are a Yankee Doodle Chicken, sir. – Dr. S.]

(That roadsit gave me the worst hangover of my life. There's nothing worse than watching Bush getting re-elected with a hangover! – F.F.)

Three weeks later, Ruckus Thomas, my Hen, and I were staying at a cottage in nearby Ellison Bay when we set up a smaller traveling roadsit out by state highway 42. Many passing cars honked and waved. Then one man gave us a bag of gourmet crackers and said, "You guys look hungry!" An hour later, a man driving some food distributor truck pulled over and gave us a HUGE pack of beef sticks saying, "You guys look hungry!" People offering meat to our roadsits, THIS is my punk!

–The Rhythm Chicken
Rhythmchicken@hotmail.com

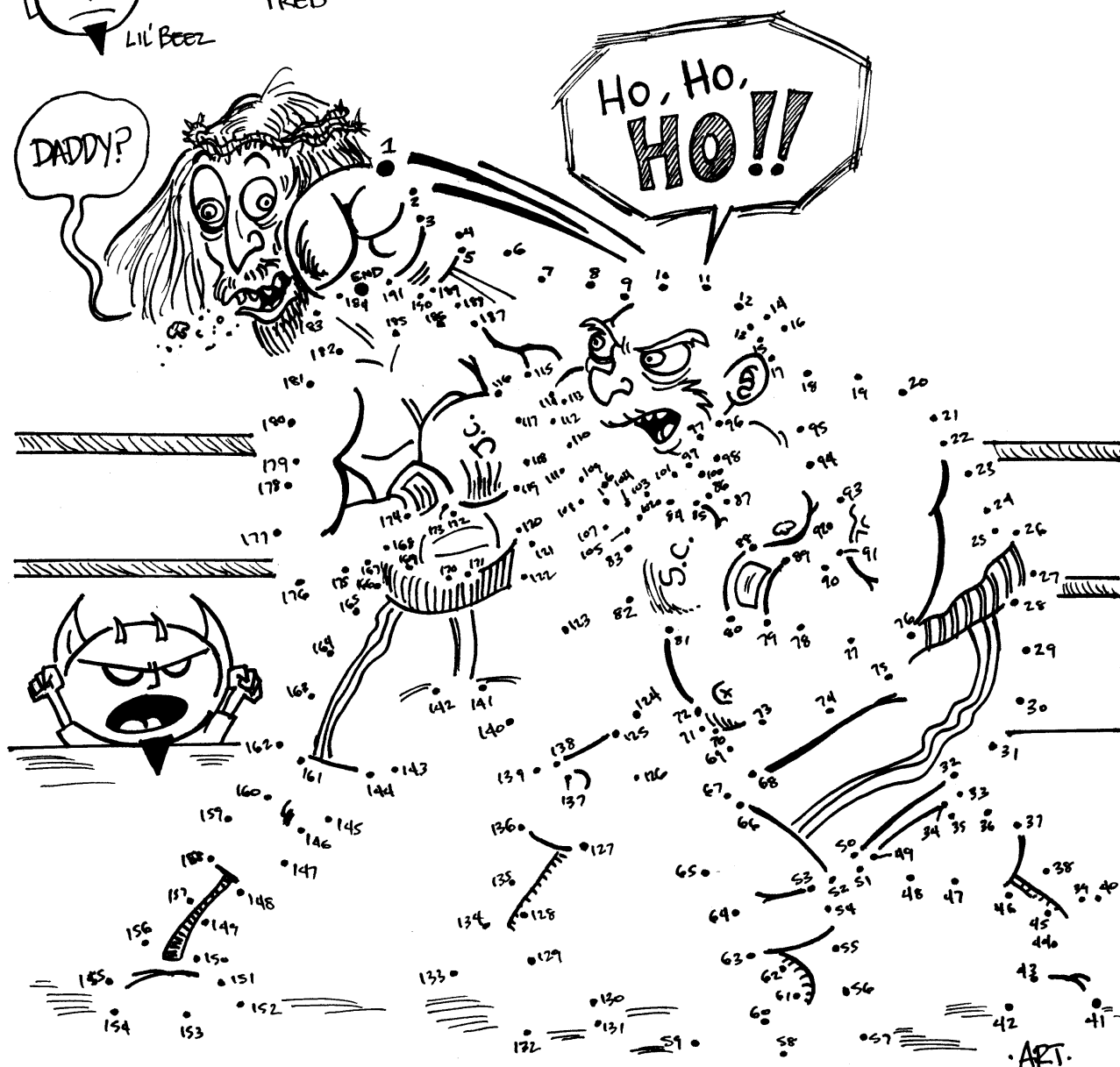


SHIZZVILLE

ASKS:
WHO RULES X-MAS?



GRAB YER PENCIL,
CONNECT THA DOTS
AND FIND OUT!!!





Enemy

It was sometime in August when I woke to a giant spotlight soaring through and illuminating my entire bedroom. I leapt out of bed. The sound of the helicopter was deafening. I'd lived in this apartment in this new town for only two and a half months. I stood there in the blinding white searchlight and thought, *so this is Long Beach*.

I ran outside in bare feet, waving wildly at the sky to tell them, "You've got the wrong girl! You want some other guy!" Maybe it was because I was still half-asleep and that I had a few outstanding credit card bills, but I could have sworn they were swooping down on my place. My running outside didn't help matters much and just made them circle in tighter, closer. As they shined that giant flashlight on me, I wondered who exactly had rented the apartment before me, and where were they now? Someone sleeping soundlessly in the dark, on the other side of town.

It turns out, helicopters circle the beach here with blinding spotlights, scouring the shore not for thieves or violent offenders, but for gay beach hustlers and the occasional small time drug dealer. I guess there's not a lot going on at the police department in coastal Long Beach. They comb the beach with surprising regularity. But are helicopters really necessary when the only violations here are a few exposed members and bared behinds? And a few baggies of Good Times?

I moved 350 miles from San Francisco, one of the most highly gay populated cities in the country to inadvertently arrive across the street from one of the most notorious gay bars in Long Beach and greater Orange County. I'm grateful to live in a liberal neck of town, but it's called fucking *Ripples*, presumably because it stands across from the waveless ocean. Call me crazy, maybe it's just the line of frolicking gray whales painted across the top, but the bar just lacks the edge of SF. Though it has its own charm. The irony of the light and gentle name is that there is

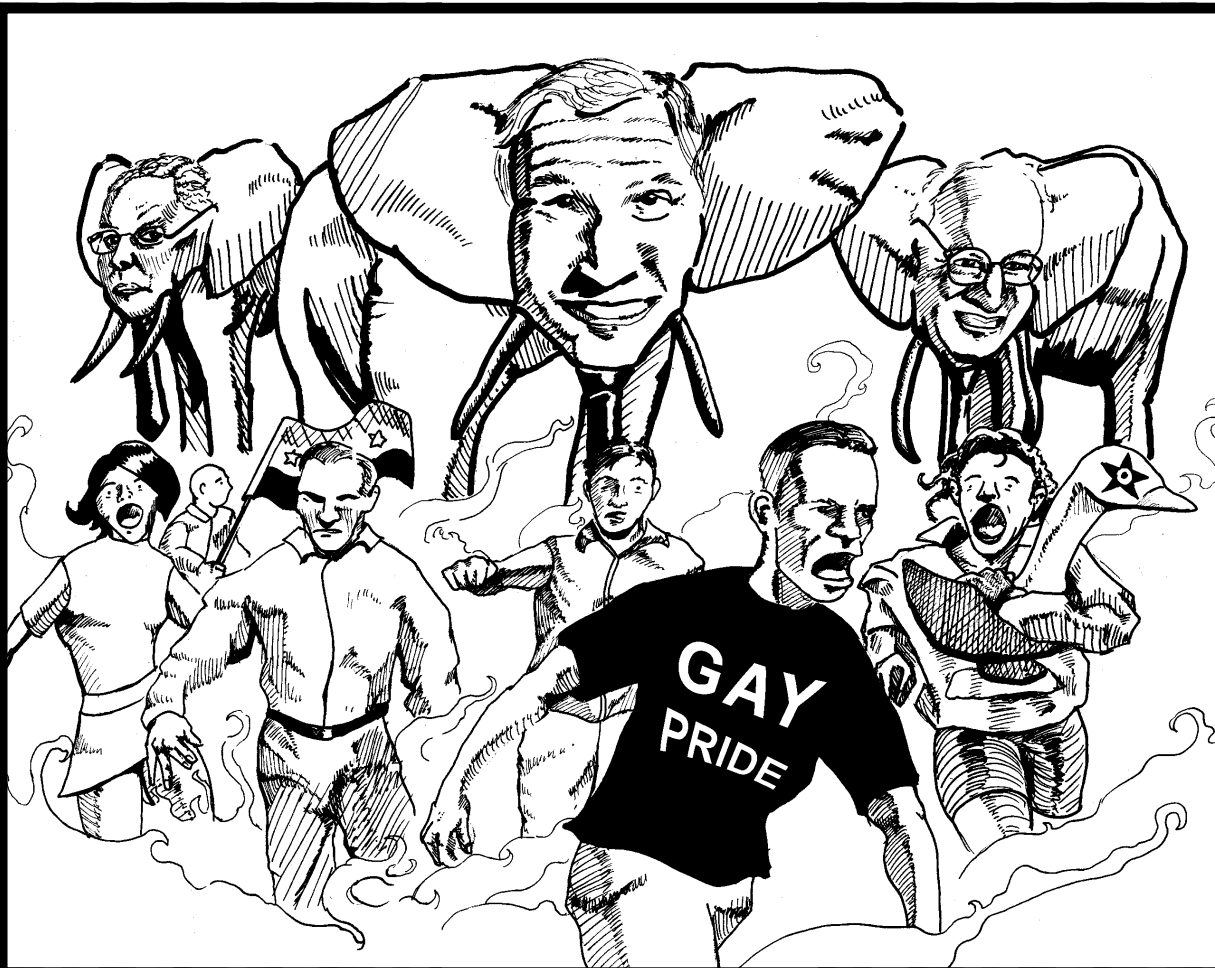
major hardcore male prostitution mere steps away. Not so gentle after all...

Sometimes when it's late you can hear its techno thumping, like a plastic heart beating through the night. The bar reminds me of where I came from, of my old city in San Francisco. It provides endless people watching, if we're in the mood to hang out on the porch with a few beers. That and the fact that the pay phones outside the liquor store across the street are the only ones in the neighborhood, which brings in all sorts of "pharmaceutical" folk to join the party. I mean I guess these guys could be calling their wives or friends or mothers on those payphones at three-thirty in the morning, but I'm not convinced. So out there on the beach, next to the lines of sagging trousers, lurk a few little baggie pushers. Needless to say the helicopters aren't going away anytime soon.

What's ridiculous to me is that we still have the Three Strikes law in California, the supposed most liberal state in the nation. For those in other

AYN IMPERATO

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS LARSEN; CHRISFINGAZ@AOL.COM



states, this California law prosecutes anyone who commits three of any sort of "serious" felony (including drug trafficking/possession), any time throughout their life, to the extreme extent of the law. A third strike can impose a 25 to life sentence and even a second strike now often results in double the normal term. This includes non-violent crimes, such as what some of the dealers do outside my door. Someone

al taxed profession, similar to peddling tobacco or alcohol. As such, drug peddlers are, by all US government standards, worthless in their "contribution" (of money) to society. But still the drug economy exists, whether we morally approve or disapprove. It's not going to go away by locking people up. However, as things stand, it serves a politician more to lock 'em up and use the conviction numbers to build upon a

worse is that these prison terms are on our dime, even if you didn't vote for it and don't want to keep the people in there. Sounds unfair because it is.

But fire and brimstone aside, here's the really big question of the year: What will the new Republican theme song be, now that Sir Idiot Son II is our president for four more splen-

...in a few years, "Oops I Did It Again" might be an appropriate theme as Bush announces plans to carpet bomb Iran next. He Ho. Good times.

caught three times with a big enough bag of cocaine or speed can essentially be put in jail for 25 years or more. Non-violent crimes make up 65% of all third strike sentences. There are more life sentences issued under the three strikes law for drug possession than for second-degree murder, assault with a deadly weapon and rape combined.

In the last election, the proposition to amend it to include only violent offenders was narrowly and stupidly defeated. Some of the people I see outside my door may well end up spending the better part of their lives in jail, if they aren't very careful. After three counts, they'll serve similar amounts of time in jail as those who commit rapes, serial murders, kidnappings or robberies with a deadly weapon. It sounds unfair because it is.

It doesn't take a lot of figuring to realize the real reason drugs are criminalized in the US is that drug dealers and users don't pay taxes. It all boils down to dollars in the end. As it stands, there is too much pressure from many conservative people for it to ever be considered an actu-

conservative political campaign, with claims that it saves government money by treating less people for drug addictions or related medical emergencies.

The fact is it costs roughly \$1.5 million to feed, clothe, bathe, provide medical services, and otherwise maintain a prisoner's life for twenty years. This is grossly more than it would cost to provide drug and medical treatment for them, or even for a thousand people, for a couple of months. Or probably, even, off and on for twenty years.

And locking a few pushers up doesn't seem to keep people from doing drugs. It just creates a vacancy and increases the street demand for more drug dealers. And the logic: that a decade-long prison term will really help prepare these people to become mainstream nine to five-ers when they get out—of prison. Now there's logic at its finest. What about instilling hope or options? How much does that cost these days? No one's going to find that in your average prison. Why not use some of that money for job training, college or tutoring options? What's

dorous years? Now that they finally figured out that "Born in the USA" is actually about the disillusioned working class?

Let's see, there aren't many Republican rock and rollers, and the ones who are: Alice Cooper, Kid Rock, Ted "The Nuge" Nugent, Merle Haggard, and Brittany Spears? Well, they can't exactly play, "School's Out" or "Wang Dang Sweet Poon Tang" as Bush strides to the podium. However, in a few years, "Oops I Did It Again" might be an appropriate theme as Bush announces plans to carpet bomb Iran next. He Ho. Good times.

The war for oil, the war on drugs. *It all boils down to dollars in the end.*

So where was I? Helicopters. The ones literally outside my door, circling down on those untouchable profits. It's like a mini Bush invasion out there sometimes, honing in on those people who share something in common with Iraqis. They share the same name: enemy.

—Ayn Imperato

AYN IMPERATO



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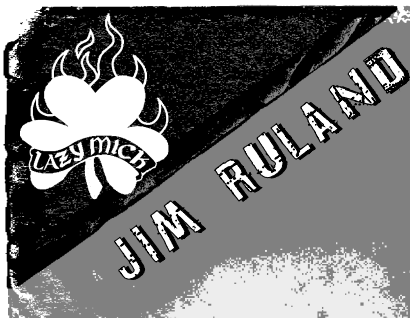
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LAZY MICK

ONE BRILLIANT MORNING

LURIGETHAN

So there we were, the seven of us in the space wagon, Andy, Jackie, Francis, Meghan, Mario, Noel and me, rolling up Northern Ireland's Antrim Coast to the village of Cushendall. After being cramped in a tiny apartment in Dublin for a week, it was great to be heading to a big, spacious house in the country that was just a short walk from the sea. It was called Lurigethan House because it sat in the shadow of the mountain that was its namesake. It wasn't the biggest mountain I'd ever seen, but this was Ireland not Nepal, and at 400 meters above sea level it was awfully impressive to look at.

The Lurigethan was like a three-tier wedding cake. The bottom level rose gently and steadily over a great distance. The second level was considerably steeper and angled sharply upward to the third level, which was the shortest but steepest of them all. It looked exactly like a mesa out of a Chuck Jones roadrunner cartoon only instead of being pink or purple it was green, and by green I mean suffused with the green gloom of ten thousand rainfalls. It was a shade I'd only seen once before, one magical summer in the southwest of Virginia during the end of the rainy season, when thunderstorms ripped up and down the New River Valley every afternoon at four and pelted the slopes of ancient mountains that were once equal to the Himalayas.

Lurigethan captivated my imagination. The second I saw it I knew I was going to have to climb it.

FIRST APPROACH

I woke up before dawn on a cold, rainy morning, laced up my boots, and headed out on foot toward Waterfoot on the Antrim Coast Road. When I reached the edge of the hurling pitch—the field where the locals try to knock a hard leather ball into a goal the size of a closet and violently slash each other with sticks—I turned right and followed the road up into a quiet neighborhood. Small homes with large paved driveways and lace curtains in the windows quietly belched smoke. Despite the softly falling rain, I could smell a mixture of burning coal and turf smoke, a sharp, lingering scent you won't experience anywhere else in the universe.

After walking a mile and a half, I felt no closer to the mountain. There were no roads to the mountaintop, no official trails to follow, so I heeded signs for a guest cottage farther up the mountain. I had been walking about forty-five minutes when I spied a field overlooking the Antrim Coast Road, and sitting at the edge of the

field, perched dramatically on the tip of a promontory, were the crumbling ruins of an ancient fortress. There were no signs, no placards, nothing whatsoever to tell me what I was looking at, just a wide metal gate that could be swung open to permit the egress and exit of cattle and farming equipment.

I slipped open the gate and approached the ruins. From a distance, the field had appeared to rise gently toward the ruins, but this was not the case. The field was gullied and uneven, and I seldom took more than a few paces without having to alter my course and mind my footing on the slick, cratered hillock. In other words, it required my attention. So when I made my final approach up to the fortress, and saw what its ancient habitats saw, it about took my breath away.

Directly before me lay Red Bay and the village of Waterfoot. The sharply gusting wind etched white crescents atop the waves as they skerried across the water from Scotland. Although dawn was surely breaking, it was no match for the weather systems swirling about the Irish Sea. I was standing in the ruins of an ancient lookout post, and if it was easy to imagine Danish ships and Viking longboats knifing through the swells, it was just as easy to imagine Irish berserkers rushing out to meet them in the tide. It was kind of a Led Zeppelin moment.

Later, I learned I'd been standing in the ruins of Red Bay Castle that had been built over 750 years ago and had been the scene of many battles in the 1500s before it was abandoned in the 1600s. That's the thing about Ireland: one is constantly stumbling upon buildings that have stood empty longer than our entire nation has been in existence.

My scamper across the field's long grasses left the lower half of my jeans thoroughly soaked. I considered turning around, but quickly dismissed the thought and slogged on. If the view was this good here, what must it be like from the top of the mountain?

But I didn't make it to the top that morning. I kept walking back and forth along the base of the mountain, looking for a road that wasn't there. I finally found a gap between the hedges that separated adjacent fields. It wasn't paved, but the path was littered with stones to accommodate a small tractor as it lumbered up the path. The path was actually a meter lower than the fields it separated, so I imagine it served as a channel for water when the rains were particularly intense, a fact which did not exactly comfort me. All the stones, tree roots, and bits of wood were covered with green moss.

The path came to an end at a fence, effectively marking the limit of the first level of the wedding cake. Beyond the fence the incline steepened dramatically. I'd walked miles and miles and had ascended maybe 100 meters. The

remaining 300 meters, however, could be gained in a considerably shorter span, owing to the steepness of the next two levels, which, I could plainly see, was a good bit more daunting now that I was staring straight up at it. I debated as to whether I should hop the fence and continue my ascent. I was cold, wet, hungry, and didn't want to get harassed for trespassing, but the ayes had it, as it were, and I vaulted the fence and started to climb. There was no path to follow, but plenty of rough gorse to avoid and clumps of thick brush to circle around, beyond which I came upon a cluster of sheep, who bolted away, braying loudly. That's when I turned around. Crossing an empty field was one thing, interfering—and this is as good a place for a sheep-shagging joke as any:

Q. Why did the farmer shag his sheep at the edge of the cliff?

A. So they'd push back.

—with a working farmer's livestock quite another. I went home for a cup of tea and a bit of fry.

THE LURIG

There aren't very many bars in Cushendall, but it certainly seemed like there were, and this is because every bar in town has at least two names. For instance, the name of a bar that was also a restaurant might have one name outside for the restaurant and another name inside for the bar, even though the place only has one room. Or people would refuse to acknowledge the name of a place under new management and either refer to the place by its old name or skip both new and old name alike and simply refer to it as so-and-so's old place, which was confusing since 75% of the bars on the island are named after people. I was constantly walking toward a bar or pub thinking, here we are going to, say, Johnny Joe's, but the sign on the door would say something else.

One bar was particularly confusing in that the new owner, who was a champion hurler, named it after the hurling stick and ball, only the sign was in Irish and I never could get the pronunciation right, but, luckily for me, everyone referred to it as The Lurig, and that's where we ended up, night after night drinking whiskey, Guinness and choco-pops (Bailey's and crème d'menthe, and if you do it right, it looks like a wee pint of green Guinness), shooting pool, playing the jukebox, and making friends with the people of Cushendall regardless of whether they were seventeen or seventy.

It seemed like we crammed a year's worth of strangeness into a few days. Most nights, the bartender, a middle-aged woman with a beautiful soul named Maggie, let us stay as long as we liked. She'd simply lock us in and keep serving. There was the time a man celebrating his birthday shared a bottle of Jack Daniels with us—

inside the bar. There was the time a boy celebrating quitting his job got us insanely high on hash—inside the bar. There was the time Mario slept with a chambermaid—this is as good a time as any to tell you my sister's favorite Irish joke:

Q. Why did the Irishman wear two condoms?

A. To be sure, to be sure

—luckily not inside the bar, but believe you me she was no Nora Joyce. And then there was the time a queer little Moroccan dude confessed to me he thought Mario was beautiful—just like Osama bin Laden.

One night I told Maggie about my mishap on the mountain, and she assured

We went back to the Lurig, drank some whiskey, played some music, shot some shit, etc. etc. and when the hours started getting smaller we decided to take the party back to our house, and that's when I decided to take the ecstasy. More whiskey, more music, more shit talking, and then I had a brilliant idea: let's climb Lurigethan.

Let's indeed.

Strangely, I wasn't able to talk any of our new Irish friends into the expedition—"I'd rather go to work than climb that fucking mountain"—but both my sister, Meghan, and her roommate, Mario, were game. We changed our

We'd all been on more strenuous hikes than this one, but none after drinking and smoking and taking drugs all night. Mario led the charge and I brought up the rear. I had to claw my way up the mountain with my hands and feet, ignoring the stinging nettles burrowing into my palms. I took many breaks. At one point I lay down on my back and watched the fast-moving clouds scudding by, and I probably would have stayed there if it hadn't occurred to me that I couldn't say for certain that I wasn't lying in a big pile of sheep shit. I got up and struggled to the summit.

Maggie was right about the top, it was indeed as flat as a football pitch, but it was as



me that no one would mind if I crossed their field and I should give it another go. She told me that the top was as flat as a football pitch and that when she was a young girl, at first snow they'd take the empty turf bags and go sledding down Lurigethan.

Sheep or no sheep, I resolved to give it another go.

THE ASCENT

On our second to last night in Cushendall, we all went to the bar at the hotel where they were giving out 300 free pints of Australian beer as part of a promotion (I recall that the girls handing out the beer were hot, the beer was good but not great, and the name not at all). After a few drinks we were joined by a bunch of younger guys, teenagers whom we'd met a few nights before at The Lurig. They were hitting on some girls from the neighboring village. "Carnlough birds are easy," one explained. I couldn't understand why I couldn't understand a fucking thing they were saying when it dawned on me they were out of their minds on ecstasy. Soon, I would be out of my mind on ecstasy, too, but I didn't know that yet.

clothes, bundled up for inclement weather, and set out.

Getting to the place where my ascent had been previously stymied took half as long as it had before now that I knew where to go. We were over the fence and onto the mountain proper in no time. The sun rose over Scotland but the rain continued to piss down on us, but the ecstasy had a softening effect on the weather so that it didn't feel so much like rain but wet air that blew bluish puffs of gauzy fog down the mountain like ghosts of restless sheep.

The second level was harder than the first, but it wasn't exceptionally difficult. Some places required long strides; others nimble feet. Up to this point, you couldn't really call it a climb, but a steep hike, but that was about to change. The grade on the third tier was equivalent to what you'd find on a double diamond ski trail. We took a break and looked at how the whole seascape opened up to reveal not just the village below but the surrounding farmland nestled in the glens like patchwork and far-off hills that must have been truly massive back when Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England were all one land mass and part of a vast desert.

wide and as it was long and it would have taken dozens of pitches laid side by side and stitched together to cover the tabletop mountain. We were standing inside the perimeter of another ancient fortress that is said to have once been the home of the Irish folk hero Finn Mac Cool and his son Ossarian. The views were magnificent, or at least they would have been if it hadn't been raining, but it felt as if the whole of North Antrim lay at our feet.

My sister, Mario, and I congratulated ourselves on our achievement, and it was then, after the obligatory group hug, that I produced the can of Guinness I'd secreted away in my jacket pocket, cracked it open, and passed it around.

"Brilliant!"

Aye, brilliant, which is as good a time as any to tell you my all-time favorite Irish joke:

Q. If you had a penis growing out of your forehead, how big would it be?

A. I don't know.

Q. And you never would, because your bollocks would be hanging down in your eyes.

—Jim Ruland

JIM RULAND



GUERRILLA MY DREAMS

They Were All Playing House

"Liz, did you DJ at a house party with Explogasm last weekend?" My brother asked.

"No, but Carlos did," I answered, mentioning the name of my boyfriend, who, like me, has a penchant for matching beats on varied pieces of vinyl to create a seamless flow of music.

"I think the *Loyolan* dissed him."

The *Los Angeles Loyolan* is the campus newspaper at Loyola Marymount University, where my brother is a student and where Carlos and I are considered alumni. It is like most campus newspapers in that it is written in a fashion that is just striving to reach the Edge. You know that Edge, it's what LCD Soundsystem claimed to be losing when ranting about seeing Can play in Cologne throughout the course of the band's first club hit, aptly titled "Losing My Edge." Edge is what the local papers think they have when reporting on second-generation celebrities slumming in Echo Park while trainwrecking records before large crowds of Mallory Keaton look-alikes at dive bars that have suddenly become cool. Edge may or may not exist and trying to find it is like Monty Python's quest for the Holy Grail, the minute you think you might just be able to reach out and touch it, you realize that it is, indeed, just a grail shaped light.

Reading through the article on this particular house party, wherein local sex-obsessed electroshockers Explogasm played alongside the post-punk three piece Laissez-Faire in a Lennox backyard owned and operated by our friend Juan, I thought about Edge and how this writer was trying to capture it. The DJ she criticized was actually not Carlos, but a guy by the name of Dirty Dubs, whose mix of techno and industrial sounds peppered with some dub-inspired Tones on Tail tracks became "the all-time greatest dance hits of Moz." Laissez-Faire's 4AD-reminiscent sound was described as "nothing better than an impersonation of Interpol trying to impersonate Joy Division trying to impersonate Morrissey." In addition to alleged Morrisseymania of the most irritating variety (save for Explogasm, who seemed to appear to the writer like Jesus to St. Theresa of Avila) the party boasted: "rampant power outages" (there was one); a "lone port-a-potty" (at least there was one); and a "severe shortage of beverages" (funny, Juan still has leftover cases of beer).

Carlos' laughter echoed across the cel phone lines when I told him about the article.

"Somebody reviewed Juan's house party?! That's hysterical."

For the bulk of the past year, Juan has been throwing parties in his backyard, nicknamed the Hole, to much success. Carlos, who plays under

the name Kid Charlemagne, is generally the DJ at these events and, usually, I end up wielding vinyl across the turntables as well. Nights in the Lennox backyard seem to become something memorable, drawing the neighborhood skate punks, South Bay longhairs in Tool t-shirts, indies and, sometimes, even a few thugs. Juan is the type of guy who has a lot of DJ friends, so, when he began throwing the parties, he had the intention of trying to mimic the late-1980s/early-1990s warehouse parties that went on Downtown. Back then, the underground parties focused on acid house. Nowadays, we play electro-techno hybrids that may sound a little like Detroit and a bit like Berlin, but never like Los Angeles. However, because this is Los Angeles, a city not known for any semblance of dance/DJ culture, there is usually a band that serves as the draw for the crowd.

"Here in the Hole, there is no theme," he says of the backyard parties. "It's a vacuum and an experiment that can go haywire, hence the name... I think that people that are open to new things tend to come to house parties instead of trying to be part of a scene. Plainly put, people that will really take chances will go try out a stranger's house party. Again, it's more of an experiment to me, but if I have some kind of vision, it's this: Let's put on our eclectic hats and go for it and see what happens."

Could this just be the beginning? Could the *Los Angeles Times* be next to write about house parties, often perceived only to be the stuff of teen sex romp movies and music videos? Will somebody actually write that house parties are the new loft parties, which were the new dive bar parties that in turn were the new clubs?

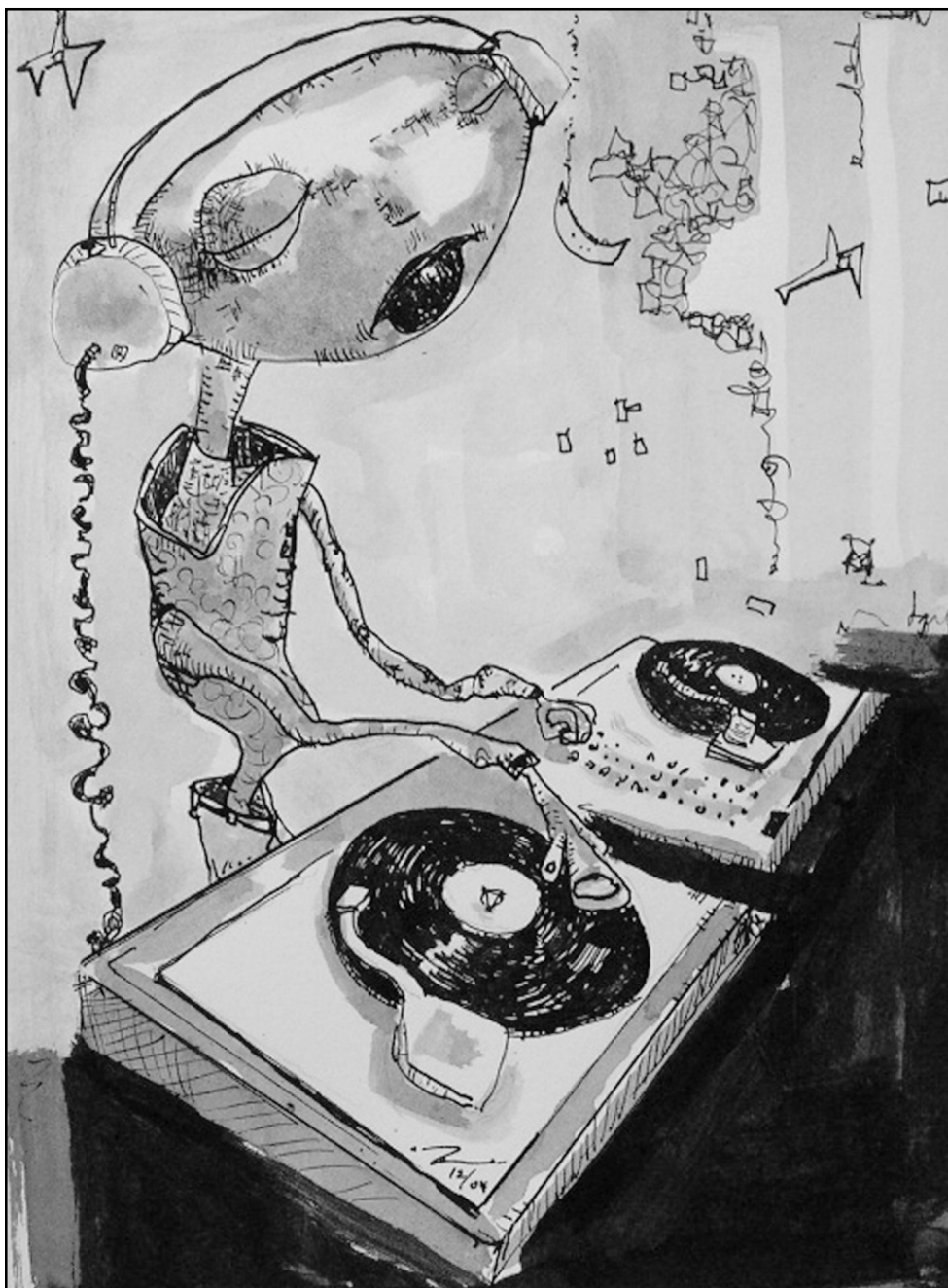
The reporter for the *Loyolan* wrote that house parties went away with high school graduation, as if everyone who ever went to high school headed to someone's house after football games for beer and sex. To be honest, I didn't attend many house parties in high school. Even if I had been deemed worthy of a photocopied flyer offering directions to some tract home in the north end of the San Fernando Valley, I probably would not have gone. The few house parties that I did attend fell into one of two categories. There were the parties that involved guys who only stood 5'5" because of their massive hair, playing Bell Biv DeVoe as the prerequisite dance crews worked hot pants as though this was *The Grind* and the grand prize was a chance to mack on Eric Niese. The alternative house parties centered around mixed tapes featuring Pearl Jam, Nirvana and the occasional pre-1990s Bad Religion track and a large group of teenagers sitting around smoking while saying things like, "Dude, I was really into *Bleach*, but I think Nirvana kind of sold out," without giving any regard to the fact that they only bought *Bleach*

on sale at Sam Goody after "Smells Like Teen Spirit" went to #1 on the charts. Since neither party option struck my fancy, I ended up inside a ridiculously loud coffeehouse, known as Common Grounds, with my friends nearly every night of the week. We would sit there and drink whatever was cheap and caffeinated while an oily-skinned, tie-dye wearing orator recited The Rime of the Ancient Gamer and a pantsless goth pounded on his keyboard while screaming "I'll slash my wrists."

Maybe in other cities, house parties go the way of the dodo bird after one can legally obtain alcohol, but this is not the case for Los Angeles. Even if you have never lived here, never even vacationed in our city, you are probably aware that Los Angeles isn't just the second largest city in the United States, it is a sprawling metropolis. Sprawl may be the albatross around our collective neck as it means that we have to drive a distance that might cross four state lines in other parts of the country just to visit our inland friends. However, sprawl also means that plenty of LA residents have access to backyards. Since so many clubs in LA are rather pricey (\$10 for parking; \$10+ for cover; \$6+ for drinks), and since last call is the relatively early hour of 2:00 a.m., house parties have always been a viable alternative. There are no security guards to confiscate the party favors, no one to tell you to put out your cigarette. The drinks, which are either free or incredibly cheap, flow all night and you can stick around until you are sober enough to drive home.

I went to my first non-high school house party when I was nineteen. My then-roommate, Reagan, and I were regulars at this goth club called Helter Skelter and so we had somehow come into possession of a flyer for a Halloween house party where one of the Helter Skelter DJs was playing. We dressed up in our black velvet finery and drove through the Hollywood Hills for some time trying to find this party, under the assumption that it was a goth gala. We were wrong. Inside a house swankier than anything we had ever seen, Reagan and I stood out as the only females present. We looked at each other and then headed towards the punch, which subsequently transformed us from dreary wallflowers to mini disco dollies. A bevy of tan, shirtless menfolk adopted us for the remainder of the night, dragging us onto the dancefloor and gyrating denim-clad asses in our general direction as Armand Van Helden's remix of Tori Amos' "Professional Widow" boomed across an enclosed patio. To this day, that mix of "Professional Widow" remains the only Tori Amos track that doesn't work my nerves.

Several years later, I ended up scouring the Hollywood Hills once more, this time with Angel, who dates back to the coffeehouse days



down on the toilet when I spotted a couple of haggard ghoulies grinding bones in the bathtub.

"It's okay, you can go to the bathroom," said the guy.

of 1994. I had received an invite for something along the lines of a gay cholo party. Angel and I were fairly disappointed that there were more high fashion Stanley Kowalski's than studs in Pendleton flannel, but we were rather entertained by Go Go Boy, a tall, skinny kid with impeccably groomed eyebrows who managed to simultaneously pull down his tighty whiteys and fall off the go go box and onto his rear in sync with the disco moan of Lil Louis and the World's classic house track "French Kiss." Go Go Boy made our night.

While there may be some sort of glamorous appeal to spending your Saturday night some-

where off of Muholland Drive, something like imagining yourself as a slightly tart piece of B-movie eye candy posing for prospective sugar daddies on a leopard print sofa, the best parties seem to happen in houses without sloped backyards and circular driveways.

Carlos remembers ringing in 1999 at some house somewhere in Los Angeles. "I hazily remember being awoken from an inebriated slumber to the howls of '1999! 1999! 1999!' The next thing I know I'm leaning over a loveseat shouting for Huey. 'Huey! Huey! Wherefore art thou, Huey?' The wine and rose tequila made a

pretty Rorschach on the parquet floor. I then proceeded to stumbled through the crowd in fine Frankenstein fashion, knees locked and arms thrust forward, eventually meandering to the back seat of Sage Jones' Nissan Maxima."

I cannot forget a house party inside a Hollywood condominium, thrown by some of the most outrageous klub kids in town for my twenty-second birthday, wherein the aforementioned Sage Jones decided to play matchmaker for Carlos and myself. In a plot twist worthy of a Daytime Emmy, Sage locked Carlos and I out on the patio. While the rest of the crowd was inside watching a homeless guy with elephantitis of the hands attempt to smoke a joint in the kitchen, we were standing on the patio, banging on the door until we finally made like a soap opera couple and gave in to temptation.

There is no doubt that I am a club girl. I started hanging out underneath the strobelights when I was eighteen. One year later, played my first gig at a new wave party thrown inside an Armenian restaurant in Los Feliz. A few weeks after that, I had my first residency, at Coven 13. Since then, I've played at fetish balls, indie clubs, electro clubs and concerts. When I'm not DJing, I end up at clubs with friends dancing to house or techno, sometimes standing around watching the sport of turntablism. Clubs are a part of my life, but, perhaps because I have been going to so many for the past ten years, they remain something of a blur. There are certain clubs I have attended, certain gigs that I have played, that I can remember vividly. Generally, though, it's just this haze of scenesters standing around waiting to hear that month's hit. Part of the reason that house parties are sometimes much better than clubs is that, even at their absolute worst, there is something memorable, something that could not happen inside a nightclub. Take, for example, a party in North Hollywood where, after being chastised by tweakers (my least favorite party people) all night for no apparent reason, I walked into the bathroom and was ready to sit down on the toilet when I spotted a couple of haggard ghoulies grinding bones in the bathtub.

I walked into the bathroom and was ready to sit

Illustration by Terry Rentzepis; www.alltenthumbs.com

"It's okay, you can go to the bathroom," said the guy.

I ran out and clutched my bladder for the next two hours as the couple continued to knock Docs and that evening's designated driver made out with the party's host.

I asked a few friends what makes a good house party. Ruben, who has a reputation for throwing house parties out in the Inland Empire, says that, "it depends on the people you invite." Unlike clubs, you aren't going to find an ad for a house party in the *LA Weekly*. Word spreads sometimes by phone, but mostly

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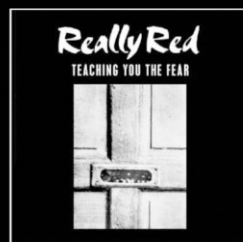
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through email, so who you initially invite makes the event.

"A good house party first and foremost starts with good friends," Carlos says. "Invite your pals and they'll invite their friends. It's a loose sense of familiarity, almost moblike, where your pals vouch for you and him and her as a 'goodfella...' these same friends might invite that asshole pissant, but fuck it! It's a party, right? A good attitude gets the social wheels lubed."

When my former roommate, Estelle, and I

can chat up a crust punk as easily as a sound collage geek."

A few weeks ago, Carlos and I played at a house party, which was actually a show promoted by eraserenemies that ended up in a communal house in the Rampart area. Carlos and I DJed in between the bands, who ranged from screamo to noise-punk to Norwegian Death Metal by way of the Eastside of Los Angeles. We had the potential to alienate all with our electronic rhythms, but we didn't. In fact, people were dancing throughout the first

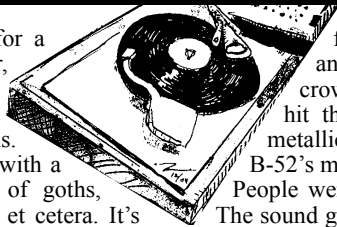
"Have you guys seen my bag of resin?" she asked.

The girl rambled on about her bag of resin as if it were her pet chihuahua. She poked around us, made us get up to look under the sofa cushions, and disappeared. A few minutes later, she returned with an equally frantic boyfriend. The skinny, dirty-haired boy squeezed into the crevice between the sofa and the wall, grabbing his backpack.

"Dude, I found it!" he exclaimed, producing a bag of bong scrapings.

We would sit there and drink whatever was cheap and caffeinated while an oily-skinned, tie-dye wearing orator recited The Rime of the Ancient Gomer and a pantsless goth pounded on his keyboard while screaming "I'll slash my wrists."

hijacked my parents' house for a joint birthday party last year, we made a list of fifty people to invite. Those who came, in turn, brought their own friends. By night's end, we ended up with a backyard filled with a mix of goths, punks, ravers, hip-hop heads, et cetera. It's because news of house parties travels through friends that these functions draw a more diverse crowd. If a club advertises that it plays deep house, chances are that you won't find many punks in attendance. Conversely, you aren't going to see too many former ravers at an event billed as a '77 punk night. House parties may be the only functions in Los Angeles where you can find a girl in a corset dancing with a guy in a G.B.H. t-shirt to Kiki's new single. As Carlos says, "with house parties, you



floor of the house—on chairs and in stairwells, hanging from crown molding. By the time Crom hit the living room floor with its metallic frenzy, it had become, as the B-52's might say, a party out of bounds. People were flying over a sea of heads. The sound guy, in an attempt to protect his gear, flew backwards and landed on top of me. Crom's guitarist struck a pose and accidentally stabbed his instrument right through the ceiling.

Shortly before the cops arrived, I landed winded on a sofa between my chums Melissa and Jean Claude. Melissa and I had just called Ruben to tell him why he should have driven out to the city for this party when a girl approached us with anguish painted across her face.

We stared at each other in silent awe for a few seconds after the couple, dubbed the Resin Kids by Melissa, left.

A few days later, as we rehashed the event for the umpteenth time, Melissa remarked, "Long live stoners. House parties wouldn't be the same without them."

Taking in a house party means abandoning any ambition to touch the Edge. House parties aren't about cool kids in neon sunglasses or dancing to that one band that every other cool kid likes this month. House parties are about pleading for Huey, whoever he is, right before spewing onto the floor, walking in on the sexual antics of people you will never see again, and giggling as stoners furiously search for a bag of resin less than two minutes before the cops knock on the door.

—Liz Ohanesian



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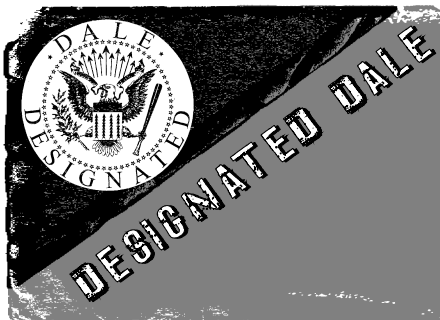
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APE



I'M AGAINST IT

There's something about a clay watering pot with a penis for a nozzle that's makes one scratch their head.

Happy belated greetings and salutations to all our readers. Here's hoping that 2005 brings each and every one of you something more pleasant than what's about to happen in Baby New Year's diaper (uh-oh...*squish*). And speaking of babies, congratulations to Mark and Christy up in the aesthetically pleasing town of Santa Barbara, CA on the arrival of their twins last November, Alex & Olivia. May son and daughter rock in the years to come as much as their father does on guitar.

DESIGNATED DALE As a kid growing up in the '70's, I was fortunate enough to go on frequent camping trips with my family down to Mexico. One of my father's friends at his work had a house on the beach in Ensenada, so it was a pretty cool set-up going on down there with both our families having a lot of fun. I've since returned to the bordering town of Tijuana over the years, but this past November, I made the deeper trek down in Mexico, docking alongside *three* towns this time 'round. That's right—yours truly went on his first cruise, and you know what? I'm all ready to jump back on that ocean liner as soon as time permits, mang. I can't recommend it enough. The weekend following Thanksgiving, the lovely Yvonne, her parents, aunt, and myself boarded the Diamond Princess in San Pedro (home of the almighty Toys That Kill) to start our seagoing journey down Mexico way. After settling in and checking out our staterooms, we soon discovered what the ship itself had to offer was unbelievable, like the fact that this thing could house over 3,000 people on its sixteen floors (not including the crew and its many, many employees). Multiple elevator areas in the front, middle, and rear of the ship keeping it all connected. Crazy insane. I won't be surprised if they soon come out with a ship sporting a monorail. The amenities this floating city has to offer blew my mind, so pardon any rambling on that's about to go on here (Get off my back—I was impressed).

For starters, it boasts four different full-size formal restaurants, each one with its own menu theme: Chinese, Mexican, Italian, and an American steakhouse. There's the international dining room for scheduled seated service and the absolute kick-ass 24-hour buffet that changes its menu *six* times a day. A hand-tossed pizza kitchen as well as a gourmet hamburger and hot dog counter with a cornucopia of french fries overlooks the main deck. Don't forget the 24-hour room service with a selection of hot 'n cold sandwiches with sides and such, too. And all this ridiculously abundant food mentioned? It's 100% included with your cruise. All you can stomach. That's goes for drinks, too, except booze, and soda (unless you buy the soda sticker for your cruise card for a

paltry 20 bills—unlimited fountain refills! Rock and roll!)

I felt like Homer Simpson the first coupla days until I found a mowing pace that left me feeling full and not painfully stuffed. It's hard work, I tell you. Bars were situated all over the place. A true drinker's convenience. Sparkling pools stretched across the main deck, with jacuzzis to match. There's like five or six big bars and lounges where DJs spun records, kooky crooners plinked on pianos, and stand-up comics did their thing.

One thing—if you ever happen to be on a ship and have to listen to a particular cover band named Derringer, be prepared for a large bar tab. And no, it won't be from soaking it up with this "crazy, all-out party band." Your tab will be larger than usual because you'll be buying drinks left and right to drown out the cheese clogging up your ear canals, or better yet, to buy armfuls of longnecks to hurl at this group of tune butchers. Derringer... good lord, don't say I didn't warn you. I must also add here that the duo known as Sugar Cane were quite stellar with their steel drums and keyboards playing on the main deck every day (their Marley tunes were pretty spot-on, and no, I didn't ask if they were Jamaican).

There was a full-scale casino, complete with game tables and slots. They even had jackpot bingo going on in one of the main bars where Yvonne's mom won thirty-three bucks and I won sixteen. It wasn't the \$2,500 payoff, but it was good, loud fun. One of the lounges had a big bucks art auction going on during the day all week, where Yvonne's dad scored pretty good on a piece. There's a small shopping plaza in the ship's center where one could buy discounted, no-tax bottles of high-octane liquor, fragrances, jewelry, and the like. This friggin' ship even has its own full-size movie theatre that you could go watch movies in any ol' time you want to.

I was going over some of this with our own Retodd, joking that it'd be mighty nice if they ever launched a ship with a full-scale bowling alley. If this ever comes to fruition, the guys over at BYO might have to reconsider the Las Vegas location of the annual Punk Rock Bowling tourney and demand a future discount with one of these cruise lines. I mean, who cares if your ball slightly sways around the lane if the water gets a bit rough? Like it's gonna stop that fun-loving prankster Davey Tiltwheel from his game of "let's see what I can javelin throw down the alley." It'd be great... I can see it now... a ship filled to the brim with seafaring punk rock folk letting off steam by way of live gig and/or consumption of Ye Ole Alcohol. A modern day pirate ship, if you will. It'd go over fantastic if

all those aboard could remember just two simple words: "man overboard."

The third day into our ocean pilgrimage, we pulled in to our first port, Puerto Vallarta. Our excursion here included a tour of the Doña Engracia tequila factory, which I highly recommend to anyone who wants to see how the real stuff is actually made, the 100% Blue Agave type. Not only was the tequila factory real interesting, but Victor, our guide, started breaking out half-size shots for everyone in the group who wanted to get a taste/knock some back. Not only did he dole out the regular clear tequila, the tan version (*repesado*, meaning aged under a year), and the dark premium stash (*anejo*, meaning aged over five years), but Victor busted out some flavored stock as well. I never thought I'd see tequila with flavors like peach, lime, strawberry, coffee, or almond. Yvonne was somewhat keen to the sampling of the mini-shots and was feeling pretty good for nine in the morning (quiet you, we were on vacation). Yvonne's aunt was hip to the tequila taste-test, too, enjoying what Victor was pouring out for all the visitors to sip. And if any of you happen to visit the Doña Engracia factory somewhere down the line, be *damn* sure to hit their open-air taco bar. Those little handmade, soft-shelled miracles stuffed with carne asada are some of the best tacos I've had the pleasure of inhaling.

Back on the bus, we made our way through some cool old pueblos and then made our way downtown to a huge old church that was a block away from the ocean. The sidewalk along the oceanfront had some crazy-looking metal statues of these human bodies with octopus/squid heads. Why they don't sell small tabletop versions of those statues at the many souvenir stands in Puerto Vallarta is beyond me. I'd buy a set in a heartbeat. After Yvonne and I got back on the ship that day, we rolled up like a coupla content cats and knocked off for a few hours before going up to the deck to laugh at the ridiculousness that is Derringer and grab some dinner before crashing out.

The next morning, we woke up in docked in Mazatlan. Like the day before, Yvonne, her aunt, and I got up early to get our excursion on. Our first stop was at a brick factory, which was more like an area of land where different people are spread out making bricks by hand, start to finish. We watched how it was done as a guy started digging out the clay mud with a long-handled shovel and schlepping it up into a wheelbarrow on the cliff's edge, like eight feet above him. After he fills the wheelbarrow up, he rolls it over to the area where he has a wooden contraption that looks like a small window frame with four brick-sized rectangles built into it. After slapping the mud mix down into the frame, he smoothes it over with

water and slowly pulls the frame up, resulting in four new bricks. After they set for a while, the wet bricks are stacked into a kiln shaped like a shed made of (yeah, you guessed it) bricks to bake. Watching all of this, I quickly noticed that the brick-building gig is overtly hard-ass work, especially in the summer where you're working under a hundred-plus degree sun that can bake human flesh like a roast. What makes the job even harder to imagine is that the people who make these bricks receive twenty-two dollars for every *thousand* they produce from the person who owns the land. And most guys slapping the mud average about two thousand bricks a day. Forty-four bucks for two thousand bricks produced. All I know is that the person who owns the land *selling* the bricks ain't letting 'em go for a few cents each, man. I've known for many years that there's really no grey area when it comes to the economy in Mexico.

I thought the people in charge in the U.S. were weasels, but it's a damn shame that the über-corrupt Mexican government won't even raise the national wage for their working people. For example, someone who works the front desk at a major resort down in Mexico makes around fourteen dollars a day. A *day*. That's just fucking wrong. And then there's the U.S. franchises in Mexico like McDonald's. The menu prices in Mexico are the same as here in the states, but the Mexican employees earn enough to barely wipe their ass with. God forbid that some multi-billion-dollar corporations even *consider* paying the same minimum wages to the working folk in Mexico or any other working stiff in some screwed-under country.

Then again, why should it be some CEO fuck's problem that some poor dude ramming out their product is somewhat fairly compensated? It's amazing that there's not even *more* people trying to get into the U.S. for work. If it were me desperately trying to make ends meet in a country whose government could give two shits about me financially, I know *I'd* be trying to get into the states. Without being a total downer here, I gotta say that some people simply SUCK as human beings, making me appreciate the good folks that much more.

After the brick making spot, we boarded back on the bus and drove into a real small pueblo that had two major businesses—a bakery and ceramic tile shop. The bakery had fantastic pandulce, which is Mexican sweet bread that I could live on for days if I had to. Good stuff, mang. The tile shop was really something to see. The tile maker

went through each step, making each tile by hand with different types of paint, ceramic, and cement. After getting everything sifted together, he positioned the tile mold on this hundred-year-old press and pulled the tall steel rod on the side of it down to pack the tile together. Both Yvonne and I were impressed with the resulting product, and Yvonne ended up buying two dozen tiles for her place when she re-floors one of the bathrooms.

Getting back to the bus and taking off, we stopped at a roadside pottery and wood market. There's something about a clay watering pot with a penis for a nozzle that's makes one scratch their head. There were some other interesting clay wall hangings there, too, like a half-devil/half-skeleton headpiece. After the market, we loaded the bus and drove along the Mazatlan coast to the Aztec

island of coral formations. Getting to shore and on our bus, we went to a blown glass factory, and everything done there was made by hand. One of guys blowing glass even let Yvonne and me blow a huge bubble. I didn't know what I was doing, blowing on the end of some heavy steel rod (shut up and get your mind outta the gutter, Megan), but we gave it a go anyway with the rest of the guys working by the glass furnace. There were shelves and shelves of every imaginable piece of tableware for sale, some cast in brilliant color. After jumping back on the bus, we arrived at a resort called Cabo Bello, with this restaurant attached to it called Georgio's. The view of the whole cove of Cabo was something else—the restaurant's outside rear area has a shallow, three-leveled pool done up in mosaic tile that comes out of the dining area to the edge of the cliff. There's also a white beach you can walk down to from the right of the pool. It looked like something outta *Scarface*, without the brutal gunfights or chainsaws.

Back on the bus, we drove along the coast of Cabo, which has some really neat little towns and beaches, and made our way up to Cacti Mundo. Cacti Mundo has got to be one of the biggest cactus gardens in the world, having just about every kind of cactus from all over the world inside this beautifully landscaped garden. The tour guide even pointed out that the garden includes two of the cactus plants that the peyote root is derived from. I'd hate to be the person blown off course while parasailing and land in this place. Ouch.

For any of you wondering if we went to Sammy Hagar's Cabo Wabo, shame on you. That shiny-red wearing, sunglassed walking mop single-handedly drove the

wooden stake through the heart of Van Halen. Up his. He gets nothing. After our excursion in Cabo was done, we took our boat back to the ship and crashed out for a while before getting up to continue the feeding schedule. We had one more day to sloth around on the ship before returning back to 'Pedro and going home.

I gotta say to anyone reading this: if you can get a good deal on one of these cruises and you've been thinking about it for a while, by all means go for it. Who knows? Maybe Yvonne and I will happen to run into you on the same ship. Then we can all make fun of Derringer together. Happy New Year and FUCK YOU, AOL!

I'm Against It

—Designated Dale



Illustration by Cindy Tomeczyk <www.cindytomeczyk.com>

Theatre, where we watched the Papantla Flyers do their thing. The flyers are five indigenous Indians who climb up a tall wooden pole (think a power line pole) and, once to the very top, four of 'em tie a rope to their waist, with the other end wound around the pole. Hanging upside-down, all four spin in circles around the pole until reaching the bottom, then flip upwards. The whole time this is going on, the fifth Indian stands atop the pole on a real small platform while dancing and playing a wooden flute-like instrument.

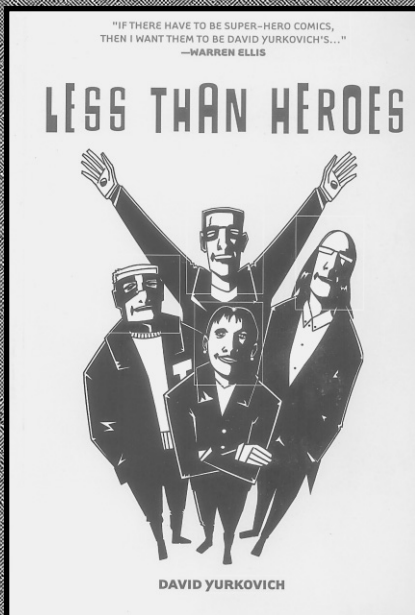
After grabbing some tacos, we got back on the ship and settled in for our last port for the next morning, Cabo San Lucas. Cabo was really cool, especially the cove we docked off of and took boats in to shore. You could see the rock arches just off the coast, standing up out of the water with its own little beach. It looked like a little

DESIGNATED DALE





SQUEEZE MY HORN



SO I GUESS WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS THAT YOU CAN TAKE THE TERM "EMO" AND SHOVE IT UP YOUR ASS BECAUSE IT DOES A PISS POOR JOB OF DEFINING MUSIC OR A PERSON.

GARY HORNBERGER

I'm going to start this issue by asking a musical question that maybe some of you music experts can answer. What the hell is "emo" music? There's this guy at work, who claims that he's "emo." Can you hear the tires skid as my brain tries to process "emo" and grasp for clarification into what that statement means? Are you a new character on *Sesame Street*? Are you some new, exotic large bird? (Though with his hairstyle he could be.) It turns out that "emo" defines his musical taste, which I understand that for many people music is what defines them. That's how we define ourselves here at Razorcake.

I still don't get "emo" because this is the same nut job who told me he listens to punk, yet didn't know who X was. It also must be added that my co-worker is a very talented guitar player. Hell, you would have to be with all those long hours locked in your room. He also seems to listen to, what I heard from his car radio, as more of a metal sound.

So I asked, "What in the name of all that is musically great, is 'emo'?"

The answer I was given is that it, "It's short for emotional music."

My dog ears twitched as I pondered this moronic answer. "What the #*^#! does that mean?" I asked in dumbfounded wonderment. Is not all music emotional, or emo-

tionally driven? So I asked, "Is this a type of music?"

He answered. "Yes."

"So if I were to walk into, say Tower Records and asked for the 'emo' section, they could steer me in the right direction?"

"Yes."

"So, basically, the clerk at Tower with their head down would slowly raise his or her hand on high and wave it back and forth, pointing from wall to wall, and exclaim 'That, my brother, is emo.'?"

You all see where this is going, right? Isn't that somewhat Godly to say that your definition of yourself encompasses everything? Yet with all this said, my co-worker's still claiming "emo." I seem to have heard the definition used before this—like hearing about rap or hip-hop—and didn't give it much thought. "Emo" isn't something that my co-worker made up. So someone please enlighten me, because if it is emotional shouldn't this guy be listening to Tesh, Yanni, or Kenny G? Then again, if you want to talk about emotional music, what about punk? Now there's some emotion. I mean, anger is one of the strongest emotions we know. Anti-war, anti-establishment—that's some pretty emotional stuff. So I guess what I'm trying to say is that you can take the term "emo" and shove it up your ass because it does a piss poor job of defining music or a person. Last time I checked, the only

race of people lacking emotion were Vulcans, and unless you're that dedicated to Star Trek, those people just don't exist, which means every musician and what their record is emotional. To claim this, as a person, is far too broad.

Unless someone can give me a better definition of "emo" I'm going to strike it from these proceedings. See how much better that feels?

One more topic before I get to reviews, and it pertains to comics. I just received my latest copy of Green Lantern and it seems that the almighty D.C. Comics are going to trudge up more money by bringing back dead guys. A few years ago, the industry felt their characters were stagnating, be it lack of storylines or lack of profits. I'm thinking the latter. So, they went about a youth movement in their heroes. Now it seems that either that was a mistake or profits are once again in the can because they're bringing back dead guys. Is the comic book industry that close to the soap opera writers that they have to bring back the dead to get some ratings? Soon, I'm going to run out of digits on my hands to remember how many GLs, Flashes or Supermen there have been. I'm asking the superpowers of comics to just knock it off. Dedicated fans don't want multiple heroes, unless you're The Comic Book Guy from the *Simpson's* and you're looking to one up Millhouse.

Now, with that said, let's check out some indies.

BUSTED

Volume 2, #17 spring 2004

This is not really a comic but a news mag for the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund. Basically, it's a great way to see what's going on in censorship against comics, which, yes, I know sounds silly, but happens. My favorite is the paragraph about *Playboy* being removed from a bookstore in Alabama. I love an article that can quote "Adult Video News." If you're not familiar with "AVN" it is the most incredible listing of the porn industry. It's like the *Wall Street Journal* for porn. There are bar graphs, listings of movies by both starlets and titles, and reviews of everything currently on the market... and I mean everything. It's even divided by perversion. The fund tells the reader what they're doing and where they're doing it. Joyfully, they're even going after the PATRIOT Act. In the back is a small market of cool things one can buy to help support the CBLDF from shirts to prints to manuscripts. One can even join up and be a member in the fight. *Busted* is cool reading, even if you're not a lawyer, but you're dedicated to freely reading whatever you want in a comic. (CBLDF, PO Box 693, Northampton, MA 01061, www.cbldf.org)

PILLS

\$2 U.S., Ben Snakepit

I've read tons of Ben's comics and loved them all, from the roadtrips to the concerts, the record store, and all the jobs and people he's met, but nothing as heart wrenching as this. Pills was Mrs. Snakepit, and for most of the pages it looked like good times. Unfortunately, all did not work out. Luckily for Ben, he's got a good

support group behind him and things must be going all right. It takes a large man to be able to put a crushing defeat as divorce into a comic, but he's done it and I'm sure it's a release for him. Hey, Ben, glad to see you still writing those life experiences. Don't ever stop. (www.youngamericancomics.com)

KING JAMES

D.C. comics, free if you buy Powerade

This is what I was talking about previously about making superheroes to pay the bills. I picked this one up at the grocery store. The cover has Lebron James mixed with some comic vixens. The story tells of James flying around the globe, playing ball in a tournament held by the organization to make money. Hmm. Sounds familiar. It always seems that the mighty dollar wins out in big business when you take a yet-to-be-proven kid and give him king status to sell your clothes, shoes, sports drink, or—in this case—comics, and you direct the sales towards kids. If ever there was a reason to read indie comics, this freebee would be the one. Thank goodness it was free.

NAUGHTY BITS

\$2.95 U.S., \$4.45 Can.

I shall tread lightly in reviewing this comic because I've put myself in trouble speaking my mind about comics written from the female perspective. Luckily for me this comic is entertaining. Of course, since I finally like one, Fantagraphics will stop printing due to lack of sales. I've had this same trouble with television shows; you know, the kiss of death. Being able to show the female menstruation cycle and

make fun of it takes some doing, but our author handles it quite well in "Bitchy Bitch in the End for Now." My favorite is "The Little Black Box of San Manuel." It leaves one wondering who the characters really are. There are some short personal stories and then, finally, a ridiculous story about a couple of gay men who resemble walruses in "Matrimony Teddy Bear Style." This is some funny reading. Too bad it's off the market now. (Just joking.) (Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115 or Roberta Gregory, PO Box 27438 Seattle, WA 98165; www.robertagregory.com)

LESS THAN HEROES

\$14.95 U.S., David Yurkovich

The title says it all. I can't tell if this should be silly, like the Tick, or profound like the Watchmen. Take some superheroes with goofy names and/or powers and superheroes with awesome powers, add some villains and the military, and stir with stunning art work and you've got a powerful comic. It's hard to give the story line because it's a long one, but trust me, if your interested, you're going to be asking for second and third helpings to be slapped on the holiday table. I love the art. It makes for some incredible contrast, from bold characters to dank and dark underground test facilities. It almost has the feel of watching an old black and white movie. I must say that this is truly a cool book. (Top Shelf Productions, PO Box 1282 Marietta, GA 30061-1282; www.topshelfcomix.com)

—Gary Hornberger

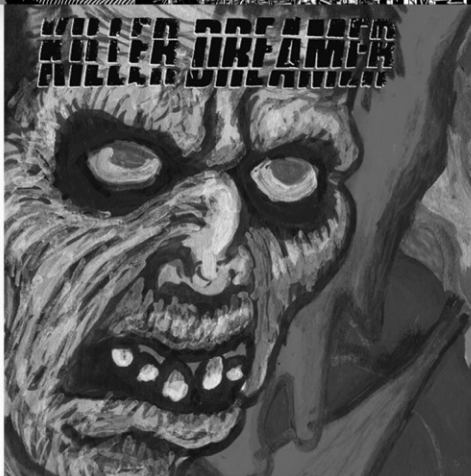


GARY HORNBERGER

www.kapowrecords.com



the dirtbombs





A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

UNIVERSAL RECORDS IS A SUBSIDIARY OF VIVENDI UNIVERSAL, A COMPANY THAT SPENT THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS PRIVATIZING THE WORLD'S WATER SUPPLY.

SNEAKING IN, SELLING OUT

SEAN CARSWELL

The first time I met one of the guys in Against Me, there were already rumors swirling around about them selling out. I went down to the Henry Fonda Theater in Hollywood to see Against Me's show with NOFX and Fabulous Disaster. A buddy of mine, Bradley Williams, was hanging out in the lobby. I went over to say "hi." Bradley introduced me to Tom, the guy he was talking to, and then got distracted. I asked Tom if he was one of Bradley's friends from Alabama and Tom said, "No. I'm in a band."

"Really?" I said. "Which one?"

"Against Me," he said.

I felt a little stupid for not having figured that out on my own, but I got over it. Tom and I chatted about friends we had in common and small talk like that. Nothing significant. After a few minutes, a gutter punk kid came up to us. He seemed to want to talk to Tom, but was really shy about it. He looked down at the ground and shuffled his feet and muttered, "Uh... hey... Tom... man..."

Tom looked at the kid and seemed to remember something. He turned to me and said, "I gotta go. I promised these kids I'd sneak them into the show."

Now, I'd heard all the sell-out rumors, and I've been around punk music to hear those same rumors about every band that signs on Fat Wreck Chords. It's silly. I'll get back to why it's silly later. Suffice it to say, I found it hard to equate Tom—who was sneaking kids into his own show—with selling out.

Fast forward about a year and a half. I met the guys from Against Me again. This time in front of the Ventura Theater. I chatted with Andrew, the bassist, for a couple of minutes when this other kid came up to us. He was drunk and sweaty and had just been kicked out. Andrew recruited me to help sneak the kid back in. I did. I won't say how I did it—it wasn't that clever of a plan anyway—but I got him in.

At this time, the rumors were really swirling around about what sell-outs Against Me were. They'd gone on a summer tour and, while they were on it, a bunch of major labels courted them. One of the primary labels interested in the band was Universal. Though Against Me were offered at times up to a million dollars (literally), they turned it all down and stayed on Fat Wreck. Still, I've heard people say, "Fat or Universal, it doesn't make a difference. It's all a sell-out." And the problem with a statement like that is the sense of proportion is way out of whack.

We all do this with our hopes and fears and opinions. We worry about anthrax in our mail but don't worry about the smog in our air. Or we don't go surfing because we fear sharks, but drive on southern California freeways. Or we smoke cigarettes and talk about how scary AIDS is. And the whole time, we seem to miss the irony. We ignore the facts that we're way more likely to get sick from the smog than from anthrax, we're way more likely to die in a car accident than from a shark attack, and cigarettes kill a whole lot more people than AIDS does. Or maybe none of these things apply to you. But consider this when you think about your hopes and fears and opinions: since 1994, about 3,000 Americans died in a terrorist attack plotted by foreigners. All of them died on September 11, 2001. During that same span of time, about 3,000 people won a state lottery jackpot. Using those numbers, your chances of dying in an attack orchestrated by foreign terrorists is exactly the same as your chances of winning a state lottery jackpot. Still, we all fear—at least a little bit—dying in a terrorist attack, even if, statistically speaking, it makes about as much sense as fearing that you'll win the state lottery.

Keeping this in mind, let's get back to the whole Fat Wreck Chords/Universal Records argument. Let's try to put this into perspective:

RAZORCAKE 20 Fat Wreck Chords is a label that's owned and operated by

punk rockers with the sole purpose of putting out punk rock music. Universal Records is a subsidiary of Vivendi Universal, a company that spent the last several years privatizing the world's water supply.

PUTTING THE EVIL BACK IN EVIL CORPORATIONS

The Universal Music Group is the largest music company in the world. According to their web site, Universal produces about one in every four CDs sold worldwide. Among the record labels they own are Island, Def Jam, Interscope, A&M, Geffen, DreamWorks, MCA, Mercury, and Polydor. Of course, they also own all the subsidiaries of all of these companies, plus about a dozen more labels and their subsidiaries. If you buy and album by anyone from Nirvana to Hank Williams, from No Doubt to Chuck Berry, from Dr. Dre to James Brown, from Blink 182 to Buddy Holly, then you're giving money to Universal. All total, they own over a million titles and one fourth of the world music market.

Universal Music Group's parent companies go much deeper than that. On May 12, 2004, right around the time Universal was trying to get Against Me to leave Fat Wreck, Universal's parent company, Vivendi Universal, merged with General Electric—who owns NBC—to form NBC Universal. These types of mergers happen all the time. Big media companies are constantly fighting to buy up a larger and larger share of the media market. In the last few years, the publishers of *Time Magazine* (Time Inc.) merged with Warner Brothers to become Time Warner. They absorbed Turner Broadcasting, and then were absorbed by AOL, making it AOL Time Warner. News Corp absorbed Twentieth Century Fox, Harper Collins books, and a bunch of newspapers like the *New York Post*. Viacom bought CBS, Nickelodeon, MTV, and a bunch of television channels and movie studios. Bertelsmann—the second largest music company worldwide—merged with Sony to form Sony BMG. The list goes on and on. This is what people talk about when they talk about the media monopoly.

General Electric and Vivendi are just two more pieces in this puzzle. General Electric bought NBC back in 1986. Now they're also majority owners of CNBC, MSNBC, Bravo, Sci Fi Channel, USA Network, Telemundo, and about a dozen more television channels. Vivendi was a French water company. They merged with a French television company called Canal+, then merged with Seagram's (the wine and liquor company, but also the company that had purchased MCA in 1995 [MCA had purchased Universal in 1962]) to form Vivendi Universal.

Following the whole trail of who owns what in the media is enough to make your head spin. It's hard to track because they buy and sell television channels, record labels, movie studios, and theme parks to each other frequently. They often share ownership of the channels, labels, and studios. And there always seems to be a new merger. It's not so important to know exactly who owns what as long as you understand that a handful of corporations own the overwhelming majority of the media. Also, it's important to understand that the NBC Universal merger is a bird of a different feather. What's different with NBC Universal is the nature of the parent companies. When Time Inc. merged with Warner Brothers, it was a merger between a magazine publisher and a movie studio. It was two media companies forming a larger media company. When they took over Turner Broadcasting, it was still a media company taking over another media company. When AOL bought it all, it was still a media company buying a media company. After all, the internet is media. Likewise, Bertelsmann has been in the media business since before Heinrich Monn—who took over as the head of German Bertelsmann in 1921 and was a sponsoring member of the SS—was a major printer of Nazi propaganda during the Third Reich. Even Rupert Murdoch, for all his dirty deal-

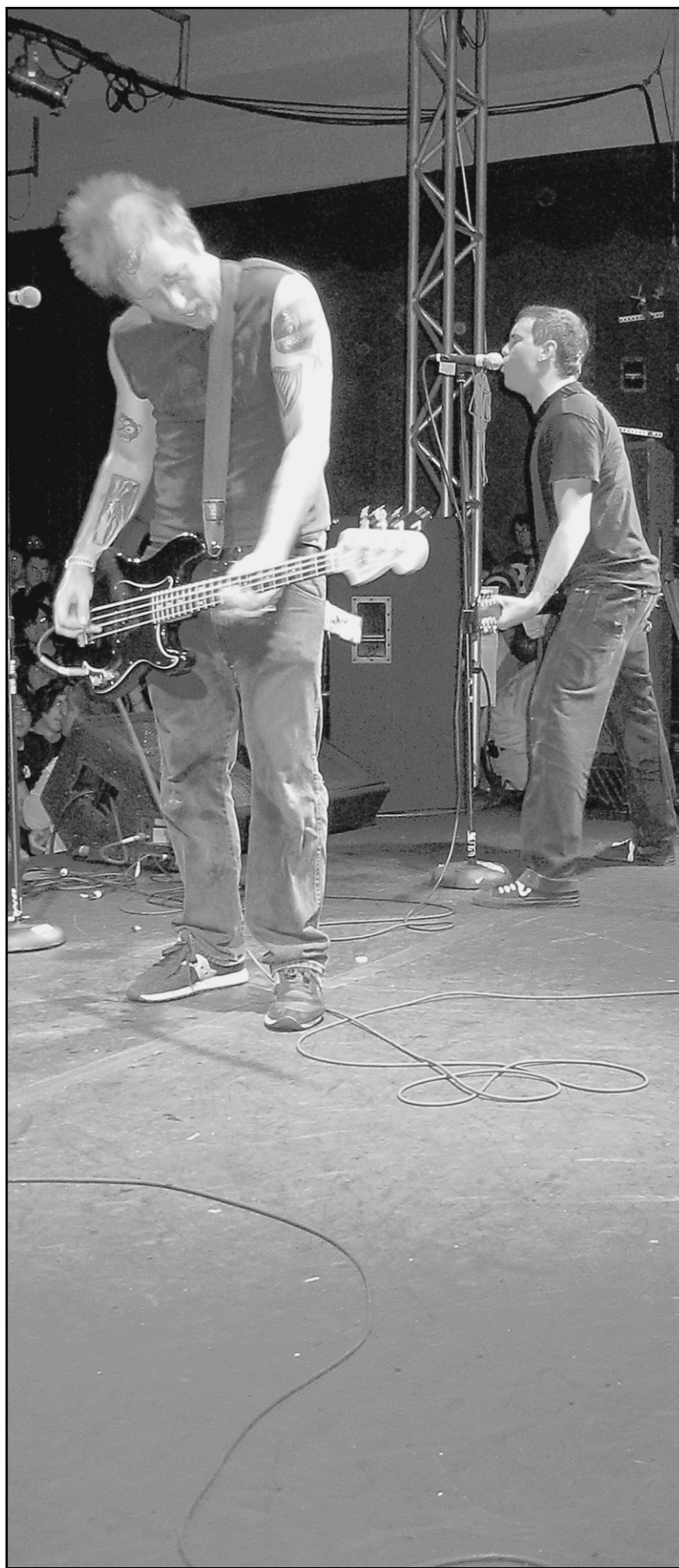
ings with Fox, started out in the media business and has always stayed in the media business. General Electric, though, was a power company. Vivendi was a water company.

Now, granted, General Electric has always had their fingers in the big media pie. When Universal City opened in 1915, Thomas Edison, the founder of GE, was there to dedicate an electronic studio. And Universal worked in conjunction with GE to produce the television show *General Electric Theater*, which premiered in 1953 and, in 1954, hired actor Ronald Reagan as the host. For the most part, though, General Electric produced, well, general electronics like appliances (washers, dryers, stoves, ovens) and consumer electronics like televisions, stereos, telephones, lamps, light bulbs, and stuff like that. As time went on, GE diversified into financial services. They now loan money to people and businesses. A large part of their financial services include loans in the health care industry. So if you have to go to a doctor and you don't have insurance or money to pay your bill, GE is likely to be the company to loan you the money to pay your bill.

General Electric is also in the aviation business. They make aircraft engines. Some of these engines are sold to commercial airlines. Most of the engines are sold to the military. After September 11, 2001, the Chief Executive of General Electric's aircraft engines unit, David Calhoun, dumped \$800 million into the raw materials for aircraft parts. In 2002, he dedicated another \$1 billion into the production of these parts, and he still had no orders for any of the parts. In fact, two of Calhoun's biggest clients, U.S. Airways and United Airlines, had filed for protection from bankruptcy. With the commercial airline industry in so much trouble, it may seem odd for Calhoun to expand his production so significantly. However, Calhoun somehow anticipated that George W. Bush would need those \$1.8 billion worth of aircraft parts. Bush did. The military contracts that Bush awarded GE more than made up for Calhoun's investment. In 2002, GE's aircraft engine unit posted a profit of \$2.1 billion. To put this into perspective, if every man, woman, and child in the US gave GE seven dollars in 2002, the total of that would add up to less than the posted profit of the aircraft-engine unit of GE. To put this into an even more dramatic perspective, every man, woman, and child did give GE more than seven dollars, because most of GE's profit came from the US defense budget, and remember that \$2.1 billion came after they paid for the \$1.8 billion in raw materials and parts.

I won't keep going into everything that GE owns and does, but I will talk about one more thing. General Electric is the second largest producer of nuclear reactors in the US. Seven days after George W. Bush took the election in 2004, Chief Executive of GE's nuclear power unit, Jeffrey Immelt announced plans to invest \$100 million into a new design for a nuclear reactor. Like Calhoun anticipated the Bush administration's need for aircraft parts, Immelt has anticipated the Bush administration's need for nuclear reactors. In fact, *Wall Street Journal* reporter Kathryn Kranhold says that Immelt's move was "buoyed by the re-election of President Bush, whose administration has pushed to expand nuclear power as part of its national energy plan." The contracts have yet to be awarded for any nuclear reactors, and they won't be awarded until well after this column sees print. Still, I feel comfortable anticipating that the \$100 million investment by Immelt will result in a huge profit for General Electric.

So let's pause here. Let's take a step back and look at this for a second. While News Corp, AOL Time Warner, and Bertelsmann all have their biases and faults in reporting the news, they don't quite have the vested interest in it that NBC Universal has. Defense contracts during Bush's first term led to literally billions of dollars in profits for NBC Universal's parent company, General Electric. The re-election of Bush will likely result in those defense contracts continuing, as well as new Bush administration contracts for GE to produce nuclear reactors. So imagine you're the person in charge of General Electric. You stand to make billions and billions of dollars if Bush is re-elected (and remember, that's billions with a "b"). You also own *NBC Nightly News* and two twenty-four-hour news stations (CNBC and MSNBC). What kind of bias would you encourage in your coverage of the election?



SEAN CARSWELL

(above) Andrew and Tom from Against Me, rocking out.
(page 23) Andrew and Tom taking a rest.
Both photos by Todd Taylor

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WATER WATER EVERYWHERE

So that's a quick look at General Electric, but what about NBC Universal's other parent company, Vivendi? They're French. How bad could they be?

Well, right around the time that Against Me released their first seven inch, *Crime as Forgiven by... Against Me!*, Vivendi, Canal+, and Seagram's merged into Vivendi Universal. They immediately set out to buy up municipal water supplies. On January 10, 2001—about a month after that first Against Me single was recorded—Vivendi Universal combined with the World Bank to take over the municipal water supplies of the African country Niger. The deal gave Vivendi majority ownership of the equity capital (which means that, though they didn't own the water itself, they owned the purification plants, the city water lines, everything down to the water fountains in Niger). The deal was valued at over 35 million euros (1 euro is currently worth \$1.34; 35 million euros is approximately \$47 million). Less than three weeks later, on January 30, 2001, Vivendi privatized the water in the Czech Republic city of Prague. The deal was worth 110 million euros annually for thirteen years. In March of 2001, Vivendi took over the water supplies in the city of Incheon and the state of Chilgok in South Korea. The deal was worth an estimated 830 million euros. That same month, they privatized the water in Morocco. In August of 2001, they increased their hold on the Czech Republic's water supply, spreading their services to cover another 3.4 million people. And so on. Vivendi took over the water supply in one country after another. Looking at the above list, it may seem that Vivendi was preying on the smaller, more economically unstable countries, but that's not the case. On June 30, 2001, Vivendi took over the municipal water supply in parts of Italy, servicing an area that included 38 districts and 600,000 people. On

**I FOUND IT HARD TO EQUATE TOM -
WHO WAS SNEAKING KIDS INTO HIS OWN SHOW -
WITH SELLING OUT.**



May 7, 2002, Vivendi purchased the UK water company Southern Water. Their 100% ownership of Southern Water gave Vivendi a 10% share of the overall water market in England and Wales. All total, as of December 8, 2004, Vivendi Water was present in more than 100 countries, servicing more than 110 million people worldwide, and posting revenues of about 13 billion euros annually.

On December 9, 2004, Vivendi Universal sold Vivendi Water to a French company called Veolia Environnement. So, it's true that Vivendi Universal is no longer trying to buy up the world's water. They only did that for four years, then sold the water supply. And to say they "sold" it is a bit misleading. Veolia Environnement was essentially a subsidiary of Vivendi Water that purchased its independence. Veolia continues to service municipal water districts worldwide. In the US, they have contracts with the water districts in Atlanta, Indianapolis, New Brunswick, Tampa, and several other cities. They have not privatized the water supply anywhere in the US.

So what's wrong with a company buying and privatizing the water world wide? Well, potentially nothing. As far as I know, there were no major snags with Vivendi Water and there are no major snags so far with Veolia. But being a California resident makes me very wary of major corporations privatizing utilities. A few years back, California privatized electrical power in most of the state. This resulted in skyrocketing electric bills (which didn't go back down after privatization ended). It also resulted in private power companies not being able to supply enough electricity to power the state. The shortages led to "rolling blackouts," during which large portions of the state would have their power turned off for a short period of time. This was a pain in the ass, but you can live without electricity. If you go three or four days without water, you die. So suppose Veolia decided to play the same games with their privatized water that Enron played with California's privatized electricity. Where would that leave you?

WHAT ABOUT FAT?

Fat Wreck Chords, on the other hand, doesn't own any municipal water supplies. They don't produce any weapons of war. They haven't invested large sums of money (or even small sums of money) or wielded any political power to produce more nuclear reactors in the US. They don't own over 90% of the media in the US. Hell, Fat doesn't own even .5% of the media in the US. Basically, Fat Wreck Chords are owned by a guy named Fat Mike and his wife, Erin. Fat Wreck Chords pays bands reliably, signs them to one-record deals, and works hard for their bands. Fat Mike puts out music he enjoys and still plays and listens to punk rock. All of the employees of Fat Wreck Chords who I've met have been pretty cool. I've hung out with them, drank with them, surfed with them, and slept on their floors and used their showers. They even got me into those Against Me shows for free. And no Fat employee has ever once pressured me to cover any Fat band in *Razorcake*.

So we go back to that whole sense-of-proportion thing. If you still don't see the difference between Fat Wreck Chords and Universal, I'll explain it to you this way: if Against Me signed to Universal, you'd have to plunk down \$16 for their CD. The overwhelming majority of that money would go to funding corporations that produce news with a bias that favors a war mongering president so that the corporations can take billions of your tax dollars to supply weapons for that war; news with a bias that favors an environmentally destructive president who'll reward the favor by giving that news company's parent corporation billions more of your tax dollars to produce more nuclear reactors in the US. Or the overwhelming majority of that money would go to a corporation that spent the past several years exploiting the greed of politicians to buy municipal water supplies that rightfully belong to the people in that municipality, then determining the price that the people have to pay for their own water. On the other hand, if Against Me stays with Fat Wreck Chords—which they did—you'll have to plunk down \$10 for their new CD, and the overwhelming majority of that money will go to punk rockers putting out more punk rock records. Now which is the real sell-out?

—Sean Carswell

(I got all of the information to write this column directly from the corporations' web sites: <www.ge.com>; <www.veoliawater.com>; <www.nbcuni.com>; <www.timewarner.com>; <www.newscorp.com>; <www.vivendiuniversal.com>; and <www.bertelsmann.com>. Feel free to poke around these web sites. The only outside source I used was <www.mediachannel.org>. That's where I got the information about Heinrich Monn and Bertelsmann printing the propaganda of the Third Reich.)

SEAN CARSWELL



I HATE A PARADE

I and people like me were cartoonishly profiled as one of the Godless sodomite liberals.

On a day shortly after the November election, I was walking to my car outside the Razorcake office. I saw a van with a red, white and blue bumper sticker that read, "United We Stand."

I assume the sticker had been put there in those heady days after 9/11, when very few cars were seen without some sort of expression of American pride.

The sticker was tattered and faded. No, those colors don't run, but they sure do fade in the relentless and deceptively harsh light of day.

And just as the ink on that sticker had slowly faded since 9/11, so had its sentiment. A united America, an America that tolerates, and dare I say even *celebrates* the differences of its people seemed like a ludicrous, almost juvenile fantasy after the 2004 Presidential elections.

Politicians had waved flags, celebrated diversity of opinion and pontificated on the greatness of *all* American people just three years ago. This year, those same politicians were more than happy to turn all of us non-politicians one against the other as soon as there was a chance that to make political hay for themselves. Regardless of the actual outcome of the election, this kind of shameful, self-serving behavior served to ensure that as a nation, we all lost.

And before you start to think I'm only talking about the Republicans, rest assured I am not. I trust Republicans politicians as far as I can throw them, while Democrat politicians I only trust as far as I can spit canal water. Both sides demonized people with differing viewpoints, creating the essential "boogeyman," "them" or "other" who's coming to take your FILL-IN-THE-BLANK away.

Unfortunately these generalizations and false analogies are still going on. Plenty of newspeople (who should know better) are *still* discussing the country in terms of red states and blue states. This fur-

ther reinforces the idea of a polarized nation, with liberals on the coasts and conservatives in the middle. This is not an accurate representation of America; it's an accurate representation of the winner-takes-all nature of the electoral college.

For example, let's look at the election results in states of those supposed amoral heathens of Hollywood, California and those tax-and-spend, marriage-hating liberals in Massachusetts. While pundits claim that these states are "liberal states," this is simply not true. In California, Bush took 44% of the popular vote. In Massachusetts, he took 37%. Political strategists consider these kinds of numbers a slam-dunk for a Democrat running for office. But in terms of American *people* who have to live side-by-side and work with one another every day, the numbers tell a different story.

Think of it this way—in these so-called liberal strongholds, roughly four out of every ten people voted for Bush. That means for every six Kennedy-kissers in Taxachusetts, there are about four people who voted for Bush. For every six amoral heathens in California, there are about four Republicans. So, imagine if there were ten houses on your street and four of them were owned by Republicans. Would you call your neighborhood liberal?

But this analogy goes both ways. Let's take a look at the breakdown among those supposedly gun-toting, Bible-thumping, backwards hillbillies in the unenlightened southern states of Texas and Georgia. In Bush's home state, 38% of the people voted for Kerry. In Georgia, Kerry got 41%. The analogy is almost exactly the same as the Massachusetts and California one—about four out of every ten people in those "hick" states voted Democrat.

Again, that's not enough for the Dems to win the electoral votes of that state. But in terms of acknowledging the true makeup of the polit-

ical beliefs of American citizens, we see that a graphic rendition of almost any state would not be a solid red or blue, it would look more like a jigsaw puzzle with different colored pieces side-by-side.

But anyway, to bring the focus back to my favorite subject—me—I really resented the way that I and people like myself were demonized by Republicans. As you all know by now, Republicans ran on a platform of so-called values. They said that people who reflected tastes that are more prevalent in lesser-populated parts of the country were the only true Americans. People who regularly go to church, listen to county music were wholesome, "heartland" people—the implication being that they represent the true spirit of America and are the backbone of this country.

As someone who is unmarried, has a mutual non-aggression pact with organized religion, lives in California and likes guitar that's played through a distortion pedal, I and people like me were cartoonishly profiled as one of the Godless sodomite liberals. I was the kind of treasonous yahoo who Ann Coulter says is only worthy of even being talked to "if you must," as though you'll catch the liberal whooping cough from standing too close to me.

Basically, we were being told that people who would take Rat Fink over Mickey Mouse, who prefer the *Addams Family* to *Home Improvement*, who like Motörhead more than Brooks and Dunn are dangerous degenerates to the point of not really even being Americans.

So, we degenerates are not real Americans? Awesome! Does that mean we don't have to pay taxes anymore? Funny, I have a feeling that come April 15th, you and I are going to be as red, white and blue as anyone.

But that raises an interesting point. Right-wing Americans get all up in arms when their tax dollars are used for something that runs contrary to their beliefs, such as stem cell research or birth control.

But the quest for clean financial karma is apparently a one-way street, since they willingly *take* tax dollars from barbarians like you and me to build schools to educate their children and the like. If we're such un-American scumbags, get your hands out of our wallets.

The idea that someone could imply that they can tell who has morals or values by the clothes they wear or what they find entertaining is simply ludicrous. I feel like an angry high school student even addressing the issue, yet we saw this silly idea as the main theme of an entire political party's campaign.

Then again, maybe I'm wrong on this subject. Anything we can do to make America a safer place should be okay with me. Maybe someone's outward appearance *is* a simple indicator of what kind of person they are!

Several schools banned trenchcoats after it was learned that Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold (perpetrators of the Columbine High School massacre) were members of a group called the "Trenchcoat Mafia." That seemed to prevent more high school shootings, right?

So, here's an idea! Mohammed Atta, reportedly one of the ringleaders behind the 9/11 hijackings, is shown on surveillance footage going through airport security the morning of September 11th. He is not wearing a Marilyn Manson or South Park t-shirt. Rather, one of the key players of the largest mass murders in all of American history is dressed like a yuppie businessman—clean-cut, in a blue oxford shirt and slacks with a shoulder bag. I am outraged that on September 12th, there were no laws passed to ban blue oxfords from airports. And am I alone in my belief that *all* clean-cut yuppie businessmen should be cavity searched at the airport? After all, we can't be too careful. The world changed after 9/11, yet there are still men in oxford shirts teaching our children in school. Won't somebody think of the children?

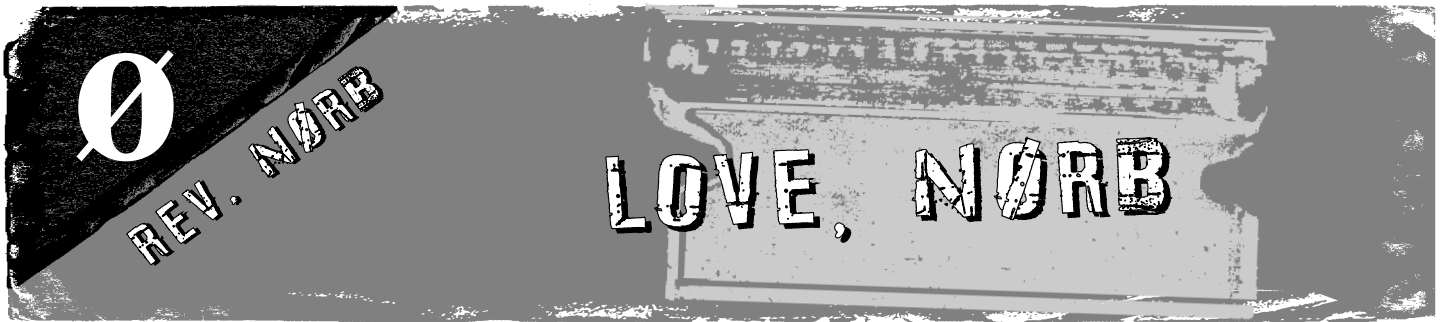
—Jeff Fox





JEFF FOX

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THE RAMONES WERE KINDA JUST THE WACKY PACKAGES™ VERSION OF BUBBLEGUM, REALLY

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FOR SPATIAL CONSTRAINTS?

REV. NØRB

Wow! Amazingly, in all my many seasons of unrightful longwindedness, i have *never* had anyone actually call me up and tell me that my column was just SO GAWRSH DANG LONG that they were only gonna run half of it before last issue! And, yes, sure, i should have probably assumed that things were running overlong when, over the course of typing said column, i noticed that the view outside my window consisted of the sun and moon chasing each other in increasingly frantic interludes—and that all the trees outside grew, in fast motion, from twigs to mighty oaks, bloomed, de-seeded, lost their leaves, withered, died, grew again to veritably blot out the skies, re-leafed, and continued in this manic cycle approximately once per minute (or so i, lost in my Ramones-addled state of being, perceived)—that the buildings in my neighborhood went from rustic shanties to high-rise urban dwellings to mighty towers of intergalactic commerce, then were reduced to rubble by enemy laser fire, were built up again and destroyed again and so on and so forth (kinda like when Fry is frozen in the first episode of Futurama™)—but, DANG IT ALL ANYWAY!—i was just so wrapped up in my Ramones adulation that i was quite unaware that several centuries had passed since the beginning of my column and the end. ANYWAY! This whole experience of submitting a column of the Top One Hundred Ramones Songs Of All Time and only winding up with nos. 100-51 seeing print has left me as twitchy as Rene Hall’s unitard. Every word i expend here, in the preamble to the conclusion of said column, could, quite conceivably, be my last! Perhaps an excess amount of verbiage in this tawdry preamble to Part Deux of this column might again force my Top 100 Ramones Songs Of All Time to be abbreviated to Top Ramones Songs #50-26, or other such mathematical horror, with the eventual top 25 to not be rightfully delivered ‘til two months hence! This shall not stand! Needless to say, a certain economy of blab must be the order of the day! Therefore, let me get right to the point, with only two mild detours: #1) Weighing in on the Pabst™ vs. Blatz™ controversy, i must mention that, as a lifetime Comic Book Geek, i have long been stymied with the quandary of where, exactly, i should store my comics. Around age six, my father, as a responsible member of the grown-up set, issued me two boxes in which i was ordered to keep my even-then-burgeoning comic book collection: An empty case of Pabst™ returnables, and an empty case of Blatz™ returnables (note: i believe at this early date in the planet’s history, one could actually get the five-cent deposit on each bottle without benefit of the case itself; later attempts on this correspondent’s part to achieve the same were thwarted), thus, for many years in my early childhood, my comic book collection was stored in one Pabst™ and one Blatz™ beer case. With this in mind, i can’t actually choose a favorite among the two—too much like choosing a favorite child, one supposes (although i did think i drew better “buttons”—i.e., signal devices which would cause the various superheroes depicted to rush to my aid, where e’er i might be, when i pressed them—on the insides of the Pabst™ case)—but, just this summer, i decided i was in need of additional comic book boxes, and, rather than purchasing real comic book storage boxes at the comic book store (main problem: They don’t come with 24 bottles of beer inside them), i decided i would store my current comic book overflow in Pabst™ and Blatz™ cases, just as i had done when i was a six-year-old. Of course, in the pursuit of my Comic Bookly duties, it was, in fact, necessary for me to drink all the beer that came in the beer case

(note: beer cases really do work very well for comic book storage. They are just about twice as wide as a standard comic book, so you can stack ‘em up almost perfectly side by side. Just remember that the little ends of the top part will poke down about an inch when it’s closed up, so be rather careful that you do not stack thy comics to the top of the box, lest thou find thy mags at the top of the stack receive a brutal and undue dent from the top of the lid!), to which i can only add that Blatz™ tastes just like Pabst™ if Pabst™ came equipped with a free cigar butt at the bottom of every bottle. I mean, i dunno, it worked for tequila and Cracker Jack™, why not? Put a bit more succinctly: Empty cases of Blatz™ are certainly empty cases of Pabst™’s equal when it comes to storing comic books. Is any other measure of quality even relevant? Point #2) Regarding the election: Say, Ohio. I don’t wish to rain on your parade of unflinching excellence, but, uh, YOU people voted the same way INDIANA did in the most recent Presidential Election. I’m going to pause a bit, to let that soak in for our Midwestern listeners, then repeat it: Ohio and Indiana voted THE SAME WAY. Think about that, Ohio. Roll that around in your throat like some manner of particularly dastardly hairball: You did not vote with Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan and Pennsylvania. *You voted with INDIANA.* INDIANA! THE TOOTHLESS HICK INBRED NASCAR JOKE STATE!!! You, Ohio, must be HI-er than we thought in the middle to break ranks in such a skirmish. *You voted with Indiana!* This point cannot be understated. *The entire Midwest voted the right way—i.e., “not for Bush”—AND THEN OHIO FUCKED EVERYTHING UP AND VOTED FOR UNCLE DUMMY!!!* (of course, when i say “the entire Midwest,” i’m not including Iowa nor Indiana. Nobody would. Would you? Certainly not) I fucking generally love Ohio (if only because its contour ever so resembles my long-ditched white-tighties), but, as of 12:51 AM 12.6.04, Ohio can SUCK MY FUCKING ENGORGED AND CRAVING BLUE STATE PENIS. You suck, Ohio. For the next four years expect me to treat you with the same snobby disdain as the same playground for toothless Wal-Mart™ hicks as Indiana is. You have shamed our nation. Good job. I hold you all personally accountable for the next four years. The Buckeyes and the Hoosiers shall, to me, be mixed into one great hellbroth known as the “Hooseyes” until 2008, and all shall be held in equal—and unremitting—disdain. I cannot continue. My bitterness is too great. Perhaps Nardwuar™ will adopt me, using my ninth-generation French-Canadian heritage as some manner of passport to the land of ketchup-flavored Doritos™? BUT ANYWAY, ALL ELECTION-RELATED BITTERNESS ASIDE: For those who came in in the middle, this is the second half of my TOP 100 RAMONES SONGS OF ALL TIME column, which was truncated due to undue pointlessness. The real-life factors leading up to this column were that #1) On the day Johnny Ramone died, i #2) went to go see the Vibrators, then kept complaining that the “new singer” just couldn’t sing in that RO-BO-TIC-MON-O-TONE like their old singer Knox did, and, after asking the “new singer” for his autograph, and initially thinking that said “new singer” was named “King Szoot” owing my interpretation of his autograph, i found, upon returning home, that the signature actually said “KNOX” with a Vibrators “V” in a circle and then “2004”—therefore, i found that i had asked a guy who had been in the band since 1976 how long he had been in the band for, assuming he was some late hire (a matter of no small loss of personal pride, i can assure you)—thusly, #3) that very night, having not come to perfect spatial understanding of certain rearrangements in my primary dwelling, i blindly ran into a very book-laden bookcase with a raging hard-on. In respect for such an unlikely confluence of events, i renamed my penis “King Szoot,” and wrote a column about the Top 100 Ramones Song of

All Time, And How They Relate To My Penis. Being inefficient in communicating such matters, Ramones songs #100-51 are now lost to the realms of history (and/or Razorcake back-issue-dom); this—as far as i know—should be the second half of my column. AND, JUST IN CASE YOU HAVE BEEN SPRITZED WITH THE ALZHEIMER’S WAVE, HERE IS THE TITLE:

THE TOP 100 RAMONES SONGS OF ALL TIME AND HOW THEY RELATE TO MY PENIS, PART TWO

or

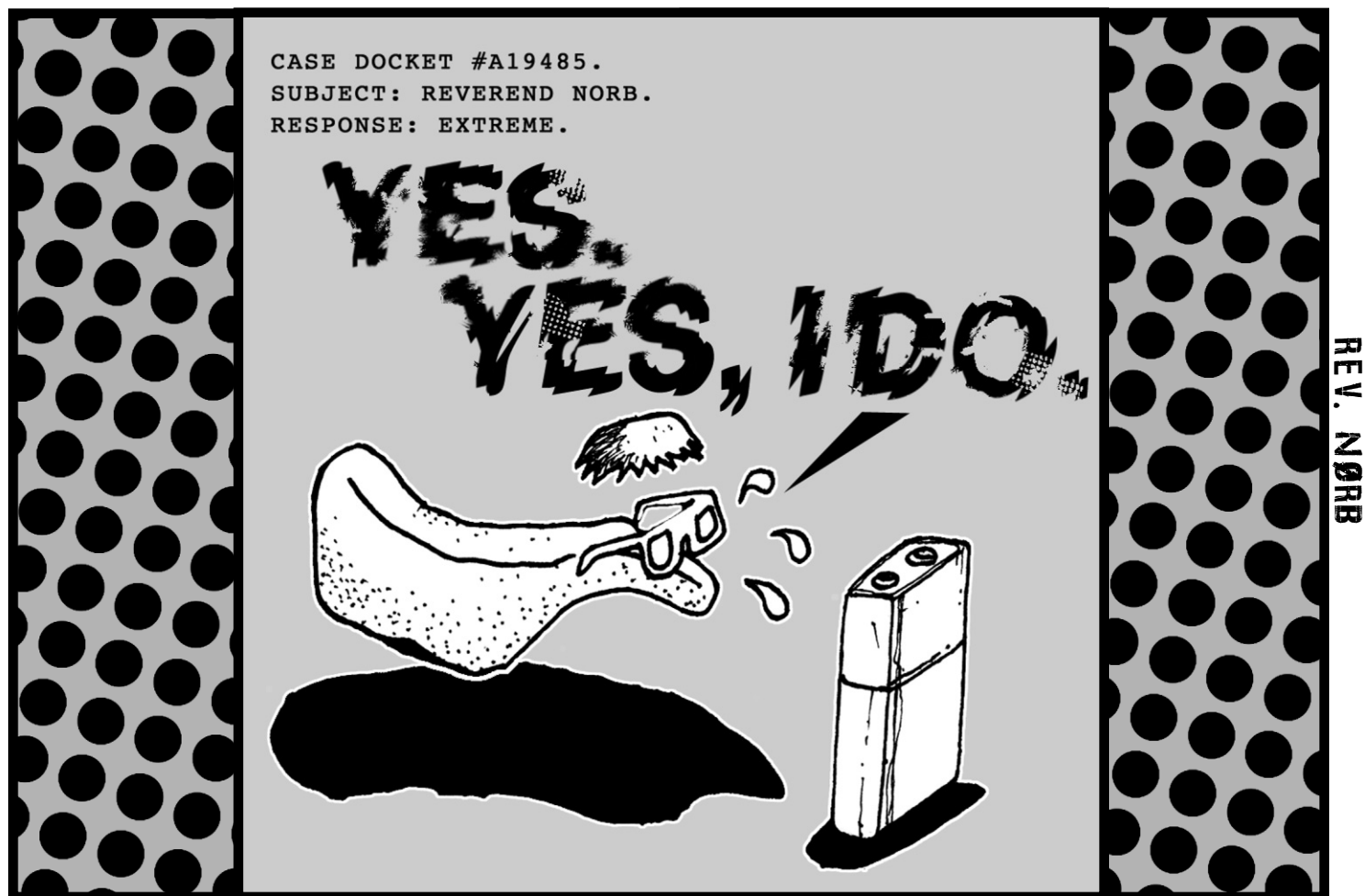
THE TOP 50 RAMONES SONGS OF ALL TIME AND HOW THEY RELATE TO MY PENIS, PART ONE

50. THIS AIN’T HAVANA (#2, *End of the Century*, 1980) I suppose every now and again Johnny had to be tossed some manner of right-wing bone just to prevent him from getting his Captain America™ iron-on in a bundle... i just like it ‘cause it’s fast and i can execute the little vocal loop-de-loop in “‘cause yOUAH hay-ted...” AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY

should have rightfully been dispensed to “Beat on the Brat.” Even Alex, watching the movie with me, was like “*Aren’t they gonna play ‘Beat on the Brat,’ Norb?*” You can’t fool the kids, dude. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot acknowledges that She is the One, but also requests a Two for this evening’s festivities. I mean, if you’re gonna fail, fail miserably. *So says King Szoot, so say we all!*

47. WART HOG (#1, *Too Tough to Die*, 1984) Here are the given lyrics, from the original innersleeve, in their entirety: “?” AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot occasionally fails to suffer from the sin of pride, even when a little sin of that nature might go a loooooong way, if’n ya smell what the Szoot is cookin’.

46. INDIAN GIVER (#2, Miscellaneous, 1987) The Ramones covering ‘60s bubblegum tunes (in this case, the 1910 Fruitgum Company, although i believe other gummurs of the Buddah Records stable utilized the same backing tracks, added karaoke-style vocals, and foisted it off as their own) yielded such predictably dynamite results that it’s hard to fath-



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PENIS: Havana it ain’t, but we do have a generous serving of meat cigars for you, hand-wrapped by real Cubans. *Wait, they’re not real Cubans! They’re Dominicans! They’ve wrapped the meat cigars too tightly, and filling is squirting everywhere!*

49. LOUDMOUTH (#13, *Ramones*, 1976) I dunno, it’s like they just ran thru the chord progression to “Blitzkrieg Bop” but backwards, and the song is two seconds longer. Was such a temporal indulgence truly necessary? AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: I don’t mind a loud mouth, as i have a very loud penis myself, and will be highly unlikely to make out a word you say over the continual barrage of whimsical, high-volume onomatopoeid noises it emits.

48. SHE’S THE ONE (#5, *Road to Ruin*, 1978) I mildly resent this song for occupying a spot in the *Rock’n’Roll High School* live medley that

om what manner of brain damage caused them to do so with such perplexing infrequency. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: I dunno, King Szoot mentioned something about his “totem pole” then wandered off muttering something about the need to locate a peace pipe.

45. EVERY TIME I EAT VEGETABLES IT MAKES ME THINK OF YOU (#2, *Subterranean Jungle*, 1982) Were this, in fact, the case, i would think of you, like, never. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: Not much. I don’t like carrot sticks in any of my various holes. You’ve obviously got me confused with Mykel Board.

44. THE RETURN OF JACKIE AND JUDY (#1, *End of the Century*, 1980) It’s got a good beat, and i can get kicked outside for not having a backstage pass to it! AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: “*Nobody wants you, nobody wants you!*”

43. BAD BRAIN (#4, *Road to Ruin*, 1978) Jah says even de bloodclot faggots like this one. Must be the comedic slide whistles. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot has been a naughty brain indeed. *Spankings all around!* Actually, in light of our present condition, perhaps we could merely be abused via feather dusters or something.

42. NOW I WANNA BE A GOOD BOY (#12, *Leave Home*, 1977) We now begin the “heavy artillery” segment of our show. Humongous chomping chords catching you squarely and bereft underneath the Falling Scaffold of Rock, offset somewhat by long, vocal-less passages which kinda presaged a lot of those aimless pieces of shit on the first side of *Road to Ruin*. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot wants nothing to do with this song.

41. CRUMMY STUFF (#1, *Animal Boy*, 1986) One of the reasons i loved the Ramones from the get-go was that they immediately appealed to me as sort of a properly adolescent version of the bubblegum music i loved as a wee bairn; basically just take “Yummy Yummy Yummy” by the Ohio Express and change all the “Y” sounds to “Cr” and crank the guitars and you got it. The Ramones were kinda just the Wacky Packages™ version of bubblegum, really—except when they wrote shit

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THE SECOND I HEARD IT, IT WAS LIKE MY ENTIRE BODY WAS ONE GIGANTIC TONGUE, AND THE RADIO WAS A 9-VOLT BATTERY I COULDN'T STOP LICKING.

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like “Pet Sematary” and “Poison Heart” and all that other doomy rot that properly has been ignored in this list. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot tires of dining on plate scrapings himself.

40. BABYSITTER (#2, *Miscellaneous*, 1977) This has got to be the most oft-covered Ramones song to never appear on any album proper; adding further treacle to this tale of thwarted teenage smoochery, i came to obtain my copy of the “Do You Wanna Dance” / “Babysitter” 45 in tenth grade, when i found out that, quite coincidentally, a girl i had had the hots for for about a year had won the record at a dance. As a Barry Manilow fan, she had no use for it, and, when she shoved it in my locker before class, i knew she liked me. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot is happy to point out that said girl later became the first girl with whom i got to third base. Now THAT's *VALUE! VALUE! VALUE!*

39. COMMANDO (#11, *Leave Home*, 1977) For some reason, i always like to sing the line “*Fourth rule is: Eat Kosher salamis*” as “*Slide Rule is: Eat the Coach's salami*.” Well, it's a weird man's army these days. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot disavows all knowledge of my identity and claims i am only “some guy” he “picked up hitchhiking.”

38. TODAY YOUR LOVE, TOMORROW THE WORLD (#12, *Ramones*, 1976) Likely the first recorded instance of an American singing “*eins, zwei, drei, fear*” without it immediately preceding “*who's gonna buy the beer?*” AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: The Szootster is still sore that the German hooker made him wear his raincoat during the blowjob on the 2002 Euro-Touro.

37. I DON'T WANNA GO DOWN TO THE BASEMENT (#11, *Ramones*, 1976) Yeah, i thought “basement” had too many syllables as well. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: Szootsky withholds comment until he finds out if “basement” is something like a “back door.”

36. CHAINSAW (#10, *Ramones*, 1976) This song was somewhat disappointing in that it was the first fast song after “I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend,” yet failed to resume the pattern of utter flawlessness set by “Blitzkrieg Bop,” “Beat on the Brat” and “Judy Is a Punk”—that is to say, this is the Ramones' first imperfect non-ballad (from the point of view that Album 1, Side 1, Song 1 is “first,” Album 1, Side 1, Song 2 is “second,” Album 2, Side 1, Song 1 is “fifteenth,” etc.). But, y'know, it's got a chainsaw in it, so things weren't a total loss. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot enjoys the rending and tearing aspect of things, but disdains the splinters it engenders.

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35. LOCKET LOVE (#8, *Rocket to Russia*, 1977) Not to go all Snob on your asses or anything, but the 45 version of this (b-side to “Sheena Is a Punk Rocker”) is the way to go over the album version, simply because the hotter 45 RPM pressing seems to subdue the semi-insidious acoustic guitar. Acoustic guitars have their place in pop music (Monkees, Bay City Rollers), but they should be more of a rhythmic thing—a timely *ka-chunk* here and there. On this song, the acoustic guitar just follows the Mosrite. I understand the thinking—just as i understand why tacos have lettuce—but i'd just as soon see this particular Taco Tune served up just meat, cheese, and tortilla. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: Szoot was merrily breaking out the handcuffs and CBTs until i informed him it was “LOCKET Love,” not “LOCK-IT Love.”

34. CALIFORNIA SUN (#10, *Leave Home*, 1977) I dig the parts where the frickin' dam breaks and the guitars come bashing over the falls like the tidal wave in *The Day After Tomorrow*, but how hard would it have been to have done the “*And they shimmy / A-can'tcha hear me*” line correctly? Has any band living West of the Mississippi ever performed this song? Inquiring minds want to know. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot likes to call his M.O. the “West Coast Offense”—essentially a series of short passes, often culminated with runs.

33. HAVANA AFFAIR (#9, *Ramones*, 1976) I have always wondered: What is the “*CHEE-puuuung!*” sound that follows “*Baby baby make me loco*” and “*Baby baby make me mambo*”? I've made noises like that on the toilet the day after consuming a Big Bell Value Menu™ Bean Burrito Especial™, but Taco Bell™ didn't have the Big Bell Value Menu™ back in '76. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: Rev. Dr. Szoot says that “meat cigar” jokes are puerile and lowbrow, and therefore urges all interested parties to “tally me meat banana.”

32. SWALLOW MY PRIDE (#9, *Leave Home*, 1977) It is absolutely amazing to me that (granted, at the height of their powers) the Ramones could take the most pointless, disconnected, insipid-and-not-even-so lyrics (“*Winter is here, and it's going on two years, swallow my pride / Things were looking grim, but they're looking good again, swallow my pride / loose lips sink ships they say, but isn't it always that way? Swallow my pride, oh yeah*”—i mean, ???) and make them come off as these perfectly crystallized representations of some... sort of... *something*. But an exactly right some sort of something! What is it, Kantian “purposiveness”? (i.e. Kraut philosopher Immanuel Kant said that we like art because it has the outer form of having a purpose—“purposiveness”—but it actually has no purpose other than being art) It has the form of having deep meaning, and that's good enough? Or is it some sort of free-associative thing? Heady mind-chow for pinheads indeed. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: “SWALLOW my pride”...huh huh huh huh huh... “SWALLOW my pride”...huh huh huh huh huh... “SWALLOW my pride”...huh huh huh huh huh...

31. LISTEN TO MY HEART (#8, *Ramones*, 1976) Ultra-minimal heart-break lyrics, plus pummeling. Genius. I think the last song i saw the Ramones play that i was really impressed by was “Listen to My Heart”—partially 'cause they played it well, partially 'cause they even played it at all (i think i only heard them play it once). AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: “*Next time I'll listen to my heart, next time, well I'll be smart*”—Ummm... that makes the least sense of any Ramones lyric, ever. Unfortunately.

30. SITTING IN MY ROOM (#3, *Pleasant Dreams*, 1981) I have had a long-standing order with various inner-circle cronies that, should i predecease them, they are to take every possible measure to insure that this song is played at my funeral. I'm not sure why. I think it's because of the first line: “*Sitting in my room, record player on.*” I think i want this song played as some manner of communicating to any dork who weeps for my passing that they should just pretend i'm sitting in my room, playing records, because, ultimately, if i'm sitting in my room playing records, what's the difference to anyone outside my room whether i'm alive play-

ing records or dead not playing records at any given moment? I also sort of hope that when i croak, what comes next is at least basically similar to sitting in my room playing records. Therefore, if i think i'm in my room playing records, and you think i'm in my room playing records, for all intents and purposes, i am in my room, playing records. Of course, i dunno how the rest of the relations will deal with the line about sniffing glue, but, fortunately, at that point in time, it won't be my problem. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: Well, a lot of times the records are just on to camouflage the THOOM, THOOM, THOOM noises and the squeaking of the bedsprings.

29. PSYCHO THERAPY (#1, *Subterranean Jungle*, 1982) *Subterranean Jungle* is on plenty of Ramones fans' shitlists, but this is the one song that pretty much everyone hasta agree kicks major pinhead ass. *Subterranean Jungle* is actually one of my favorite (if not THE favorite—several districts still not yet reporting) post-first-three Ramones albums—the working title to Boris The Sprinkler's *Saucer to Saturn* album was actually *Subterranean Homesick Jungle*, scrapped because we found out we were gonna record *End of the Century* and didn't wanna befuddle the rubes—but the problem in selling it to the non-believers is that the production, with a lot of sounded-neat-for-about-two-seconds-back-when-it-was-first-invented triggered kick and

26. ROCK & ROLL HIGH SCHOOL (#1, Miscellaneous, 1979) This would be the movie version, not the *End of the Century* version, which doesn't even start with "Rock-Rock-Rock-Rock-Rock'n' Roll High School!" so what's the damn point? People who thought "Touring" was just a rip-off of this song would be well advised to realize that, at the time, "Rock'n'Roll High School" was seen as just a rip-off of "Rockaway Beach." How that makes things all better is somewhat unclear. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: "I just wanna get some chicks"? Well, one guesses it beats a mason jar full of banana slugs.

25. YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE OPENED THAT DOOR (#7, *Leave Home*, 1977) *Leave Home* was such a perfect, occasionally candy-coated sledgehammer of an album that it couldn't have been made any better, even if the lyrical content of the final two songs on side two revolved around killing one girl and beheading another. Oh... wait... never mind. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: I cannot begin to tell you how many times "You Should Never Have Opened That Door" was a factual utterance.

24. WE'RE A HAPPY FAMILY (#7, *Rocket to Russia*, 1977) Counterintuitively, the best cover of this song was by Bad Religion. Huh. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: *No Christmas cards to send, Daddy likes men.*

JUDY IS A PUNK: MORE OR LESS AS CLOSE TO A CURE FOR CANCER AS I'LL LIKELY SEE IN MY LIFETIME.

snare, takes some getting used to—rendering the individual songs, when separated from the album as a whole, kinda goofy soundin'. However, before "Psycho Therapy," all pure-hearted Ramonophiles must quail. *Imperius Rex!* AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: The police siren sound effects make King Szoot nervous. *Come on, the Szootster thought she was eighteen! King Szoot had no reason to believe the Bratz™ tattoo could be removed with judicious application of baby oil! Mercy!*

28. PINHEAD (#8, *Leave Home*, 1977) *N-Ø-R-B, EVERYONE'S ACCUSING ME!* AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: At one point in time, there were these scenester cousins—females—blondes—underage—who, one fine Halloween, pretty much right about the time they turned legal, came to a gig dressed as rather, uh, *nice* looking nurses. I mean, *really nice* looking nurses. I mean, *REALLY, REALLY, REALLY* nice looking nurses. Needless to say, they were pretty much the frickin' Queens O' The Scene—at least from a wet dream point of view—for quite some time after that. Years later, i, the modest and unassuming Rev. Nørð, come to find myself entangled with one of the Nurses Whom I Could Go For. As fate would have it, Halloween is approaching, and i start dropping hints that, hmmm, boy, that "naughty nurse" costume you wore when you were like eighteen might be callin' for a return visit this year, yup, boy, that was sure a fine costume, yes sir, fine costume, wouldn't mind seeing that one again, no ma'am, etc. etc. etc... So anyway, Halloween rolls around, i'm all a-twitter with anticipation—*am i gonna get the nurse costume? am i gonna get the nurse costume?*—and we meet out at a Halloween party and she's dressed as a frickin' PIRATE! (i guess on the bright side at least she wasn't dressed as a Viking) *I didn't even know she was trying to look like a pirate! I thought she was Priscilla Presley!* She was not a nurse, in any event, and the whole embroilment went south before another Halloween. Feh.

27. ALL'S QUIET ON THE EASTERN FRONT (#2, *Pleasant Dreams*, 1981) ...after *Pleasant Dreams'* lead-off track, the drab "We Want the Airwaves," my heart had pretty much sunk to the base, bein' as how i—at least as far as i could tell—was one of the only people who actually still really gave a fuck about the Ramones at the time of its release, and i was feelin' like i had bet my money on a bob-tail nag when i shoulda bet on ol' Stewball. "All's Quiet" immediately quashed that notion, making me realize that, now and forever, the Ramones WERE ol' Stewball, a racehorse so fine. The rhythm of the song is great, the perspective of the song is great—I have never listened to this song and not felt happy and cool. Also, once, whilst i was getting my *Leave Home* album autographed by Dee Dee, a girl asked him what his favorite Ramones song was. He said this one. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot utters nothing: *Can't you see his movements talk?*

23. YOU'RE GONNA KILL THAT GIRL (#6, *Leave Home*, 1977) I sang this song with the Zodiac Killers once. I think it was their 43rd lineup. Low- to mid-forties. Something like that. The one with Big Van Vader (aka "Leon 'The Baby Bull' White") on drums. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: Guilty as charged.

22. GO MENTAL (#3, *Road To Ruin*, 1978) "Mental" rhymes with "lentil?" AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: "Out against my will"... curses, foiled again!

21. I DON'T WANNA WALK AROUND WITH YOU (#7, *Ramones*, 1976) The minimalist disdain of this song—"I don't wanna walk around with you, I don't wanna walk around with you, I don't wanna walk around with you, So why ya wanna walk around with me?" is so flawless that when Joey actually changes one of the "I don't wanna walk around with you"s to "I don't wanna go out with you," they don't bother to note it in the lyric sheet, like it's a dirty secret that he actually added a third line. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: Given my inability to guarantee King Szoot safe passage between my room and the bathroom, he has informed me that he no longer wishes to walk around with me, either.

20. THE KKK TOOK MY BABY AWAY (#1, *Pleasant Dreams*, 1981) This is the highest-ranking post-*Road to Ruin* song, and canny observers (such as the Doughboys) will realize that the similarities between the intro of "KKK" and that of "He's a Whore" by Cheap Trick are too swell not to take advantage of (kinda like the "Misty Mountain Hop"/"Uncontrollable Urge" duality). I believe, however, this is the Ramones song which i have heard the most *bad* cover versions of (no names, i might need a ride to the store some day). AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: Actually, not at all, but the line about the FBI is kinda funny because Thursday night the FBI raided my boss's neighbors' house and the occupants turned out to be Chinese spies. No shit.

19. I'M AGAINST IT (#2, *Road to Ruin*, 1978) This song was almost certainly ripped-off, conceptually, from a tune of the same name Groucho Marx sang in that movie where he was out in the paddleboat with Margaret Dumont. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot hates Burger King™ as well.

18. CARBONA NOT GLUE (#5, *Leave Home*, 1977) This was actually the first Great Lost Ramones Track, since, when i first started buying Ramones records, this song had already been yanked due to legal reasons and replaced with the single mix of "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker." I had to trade a guy my "Sheena" version, plus the Cars *Candy-O*, plus the Rolling Stones' "Shattered" 45, plus the Dire Straits album i won from WDUZ for his "Carbona" version, but i think he might have thrown in *Emotional Rescue* by the Stones when i whined a bunch. AND HOW

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IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: If “glue” means “cum” (5. *“To pack some brown or shoot some glue”—Meatmen, “Toolin’ for Anus,” 1981*), my brain is definitely stuck from shooting it.

17. DO YOU WANNA DANCE? (#6, *Rocket to Russia*, 1977) This was the first Ramones song i ever heard, riding home in the back of my family’s 1977 Buick LeSabre (actually at that point in time probably pretty new yet) from the old Prange-Way™ discount store on Green Bay’s North side. Some roguish freethinker at WKAU-AM—AND GOD BLESS THAT NAMELESS, FACELESS ON-AIR PERSONALITY ALL TO FUCK ANYHOW!!!—happened to play it on a lark one day, likely between Jimmy Buffett and the Bee Gees or some god damn thing. The second i heard it, it was like my entire body was one gigantic tongue, and the radio was a 9-volt battery i couldn’t stop licking. SOLD! SOLD LOCK, STOCK AND BARREL, SIR! FOREGO THE BALLYHOO, YOU’VE GOT MY DIME!!! ...and, of course, i knew *exactly* what i could expect: to hear that song on the radio at least once an hour every day for the next six to eight weeks, and to have that 45 sitting in the rack at the local grocery store within a day or so. After about a solid year of listening to my Snoopy™-shaped transistor radio in hopes of hearing that song a second time, coupled with almost constant trips to every record store i was aware of in search of the “Do You Wanna Dance?” 45, i eventually got brave and wealthy enough to meekly venture into the local head shop and locate/purchase the song via album. Should that nameless, faceless on-air personality from a nameless, faceless outpost of humanity (actually, the station was out of Kaukauna, WI, which is funny enough if you know the

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**I WAS JUST SO WRAPPED UP IN MY RAMONES ADULATION THAT
I WAS QUITE UNAWARE THAT SEVERAL CENTURIES HAD PASSED SINCE
THE BEGINNING OF MY COLUMN AND THE END. ANYWAY!**
.....

lay of the land) not have—perhaps merely to amuse himself on a slow weekday afternoon—spun this song at the exact same time our car was heading home from the store, i should shudder to think what might (or might not have) become of me. *Heck, an evil man might be president right now!* AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: Dude, take away all the punk rock muff i’ve scammed over the last few decades and my numbers are fucking *anemic*, to say the least!

16. NOW I WANNA SNIFF SOME GLUE (#6, *Ramones*, 1976) As far as i can tell, this was the first song ever that went “1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8!” and also the first Ramones song with a “lead.” Math rock! AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: If “glue” means “cum” (6. *op cit*), sniff all you want, we’ll make more.

15. SURFIN’ BIRD (#5, *Rocket to Russia*, 1977) This was a great song when the Trashmen did it (it, along with “Yummy Yummy Yummy,” “Chewy Chewy,” and a whole bunch of other great stuff, was on K-tel™’s *Goofy Greats* compilation album—an advertised-on-TV comp of primarily ‘60s goofball numbers that profoundly influenced the musical tastes of not only myself but a Mr. B. Weasel of Oak Park, Illinois as well), and it’s a great song when the Ramones do it. If anyone could be better than Joey at emitting those vomiting surfer noises in the middle, i’ll eat my own shit. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: *Oy, mate, wot bird?*

14. LET’S DANCE (#6, *Ramones*, 1976) Originally recorded by Chris Montez, i always say the little quasi-ad-libbed exclamation before the middle bit is “*Okay, Web-head!*” I also used to think the line “*Hey baby if you’re all alone, maybe you will let me walk you home*” was “*Hey baby if you’re all alone, maybe you will lend me what you own*”—as in, you know, breasts, a vagina, whatever—and then, when i found out it wasn’t, i used the “will you lend me what you own” line in the Boris song “I Wanna Get to Third Base with You.” AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: Well, how *doesn’t* it?

13. OH OH I LOVE HER SO (#4, *Leave Home*, 1977) ...i think the whole thing where they threw in the name of a real place that the punk rock mutant commonfolk might go—Burger King™—wound up snowballing to ludicrous extent about twenty years later, where every two-bit one-horse Chuck Taylor™-and-leather-jacket-wearin’ dweebus thought they were committing some medal-caliber act of cheeky puckishness (or possibly pucky cheekishness—i’m not good with names) by throwing the name of some dippily banal local hangout into their songs

(“I Met Her at Taco Burrito Mexico” et al). Strange how the Dictators covered “California Sun” and mentioned specific fast food restaurants (7. *“Eating at McDonald’s™ for lunch”—“Weekend,” 1975*) two years before the Ramones did, yet their instances of doing so still fail to be perceived (even by myself) as anywhere near as influential as the Ramones’ instances were. You all may discuss this matter at your next salon. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot thinks it should be “UH Oh, I Love Her So.”

12. GIMME GIMME SHOCK TREATMENT (#3, *Leave Home*, 1977) Dee Dee’s original lyrics—scrawled in green felt-tip (or pencil? i can’t remember now)—are displayed in the punk rock section of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. The really great thing is how he wrote his name and the date (including the year) up in the right-hand corner, just like they teach you to do in first grade. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: *Electrocute My Cock!*

11. 53RD & 3RD (#4, *Ramones*, 1976) The verse Dee Dee sang was haunting, strange, and ethereal... until *Subterranean Jungle* came out and he sang a whole song by himself. Nobody i know who ever went to NYC and tried to find 53rd & 3rd could find it. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: *“Now the cops are after me, but I proved that I’m no sissy!”*

10. TEENAGE LOBOTOMY (#4, *Rocket to Russia*, 1977) Okay, not to pick nits in the presence of greatness, but, quite apart from the great

improbability of wholesale cerebellum removal, wouldn’t a “teenage lobotomy” be a lobotomy which had been performed not less than thirteen but not more than or equal to twenty years ago? AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: *All the girls are in love with me! I’m a teenage King Szoot, y’see?*

9. SUZY IS A HEADBANGER (#2, *Leave Home*, 1977) Well, what the fuck can ya say? AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: Well, if Mom’s a geek, send her over. She can wear the Antler Helmet.

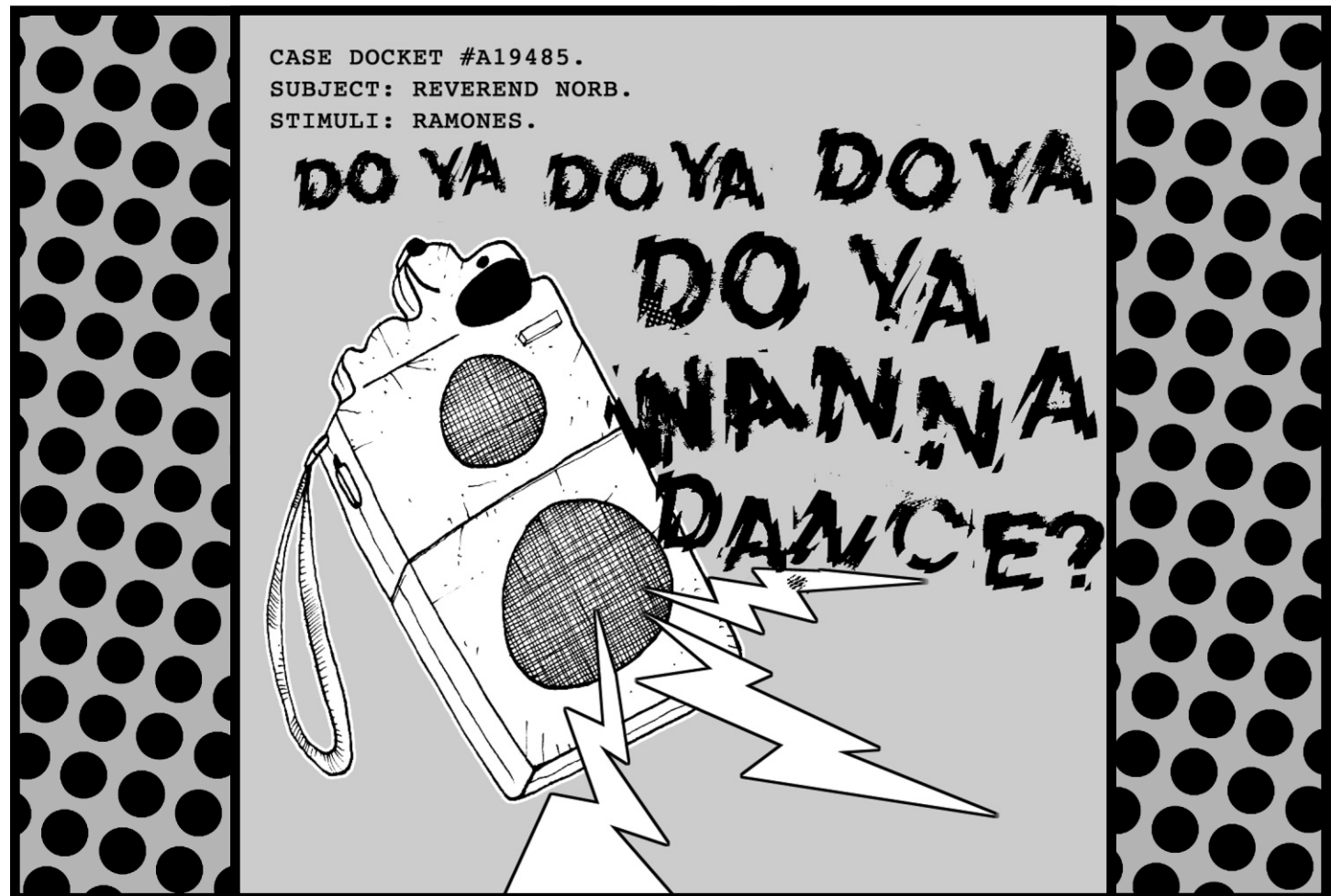
8. ROCKAWAY BEACH (#3, *Rocket to Russia*, 1977) This is probably the Ramones song that i’ve heard the most good covers of (perennially lousy Queers version notwithstanding), although it aggrieves me to no end when drummers don’t get the timing of the little false ending right. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: It’s not hard, nor far to reach.

7. GLAD TO SEE YOU GO (#1, *Leave Home*, 1977) Needless to say, this song is number seven... *with a bullet!* I’d also like to thank President George W. Bush for being in Europe the same time my band was, because all we had to do was dedicate this song to him and we made gobs o’ new friends. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: It’s all about the shooting, m’man.

6. CRETIN HOP (#2, *Rocket to Russia*, 1977) The day i finally found the song “Do You Wanna Dance?” on the *Rocket To Russia* album, i actually was carrying Ted Nugent’s *Cat Scratch Fever* album around the store before i thought to check for a Ramones album (and, to my great surprise, found that they had FOUR of the damn things out). Who here wants to speculate on divergent timelines? Not me. Yeesh. In some screwy parallel universe, there’s probably a me-prime who is driving around in a fucking pickup truck tonight, wearing contacts and not thick-framed glasses, with a gun box in the back and Kid Rock on the tape deck. *GAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!!!* Anyway, i bring the album home, and i’m really not sure what i’m getting myself into. I mean, *cripes, holy crap, six bucks is a lot of money to blow on an album from a band who i’ve only heard once, and if they were as great as i remember them to be, why haven’t i heard them since?* I get the record home, put it on, and i hear “1-2-3-4, *Cretins wanna hop some more!* 4-5-6-7, *All good cretins go to heaven*”—it was just like, *dudes, where have you been all my life?* AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot keeps it beatin’ for all the hoppin’ cretins!

5. JUDY IS A PUNK (#3, *Ramones*, 1976) I pretty much already said everything i needed to: “Blitzkrieg Bop,” “Beat on the Brat” and “Judy Is a Punk” are the best three-songs-in-a-row on any record, ever, and everybody knows it. Those three songs were—and are—perfect. Further underscoring the point that the Ramones and i were on the same page (above and beyond my and Johnny’s matching iron-ons) was that they stole the “*Second verse, same as the first*” line from “I’m Henry VIII, I Am” (as popularized by Herman’s Hermits, another quirky fave o’ mine). Further underscoring the fact that they were the Wacky Packages™ version of The Stuff I Loved That Came Before, they effortlessly mutated said line to “Third verse, different from the first” later in the song’s ninety-second duration. More or less as close to a cure for cancer as i’ll likely see in my lifetime. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: Actually, one little known fact about my penis is that it did, in fact, go down to Frisco and join the Symbionese Liberation Army for a few halcyon weeks in the mid-’70s.

Last-second replacement cut “It’s a Long Way Back” notwithstanding, those are the FOUR FUCKING WORST SONGS ON THE ALBUM. THE ABSOLUTE (except for “It’s a Long Way Back,” truly in a class by itself) FOUR FUCKING WORST SONGS. “I Wanna Be Sedated” wasn’t released as a single until *Brain Drain* came out in 1988. I guess everybody wanted to wait until they came up with an album’s worth of material that was all even worse than those four shit-ass songs before putting it out as a single. If the band had any input whatsoever as to what songs were gonna be released as singles, then they have nobody but themselves to blame for their own perceived lack of commercial success. In a word: You EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEDIOTS!!! Wait, that’s two words, never mind. AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: King Szoot feels he should have been released as a single much earlier himself.



4. BEAT ON THE BRAT (#2, *Ramones*, 1976) “Beat on the brat, beat on the brat, beat on the brat with a baseball bat.” I mean... fuck! AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: “BEAT!” huh huh huh huh huh... “BEAT!” huh huh huh huh huh... “BEAT!” huh huh huh huh huh... “BEAT!” huh huh huh huh huh...

3. I WANNA BE SEDATED (#1, *Road to Ruin*, 1978) See, this kinda masterpiece is the exact kind of genius-nugget that the Ramones could not have emitted had they stuck hard ‘n’ fast to the formula which they had established with the first three albums. Sooo... on the one hand, had they not veered off this way ‘n’ that, we’d never be blessed with the mentally ill bubblegum of “Sedated.” On the other hand, we wouldn’t be cursed with “Garden of Serenity” or “I’m Not Afraid of Life,” either. Be that as it may, i ask you, in a completely rhetorical sense, what you might suppose the first single off of the *Road to Ruin* album was? Time’s up. (er, no Buzzcocks reference intended) It was “Don’t Come Close” b/w “I Don’t Want You.” Note that neither of those songs are “I Wanna Be Sedated,” the obvious—the OBVIOUSLY obvious—the OBVIOUSLY obviously obvious—choice. So! Mightn’t one expect this grave oversight to be corrected with the second single? One might. However, one might be denied: the other single from the album was “Needles & Pins” b/w “I Wanted Everything.”

2. SHEENA IS A PUNK ROCKER (#1, *Rocket to Russia*, 1977) It is difficult to fathom what kind of a backwater stump we live in when a song like this cannot emancipate us all from the Ceaseless Shackles Of Ick that ickily shackle us so. “Sheena Is a Punk Rocker” for President!!! Of Beers!!! AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: Leopard print = boner (or so we hope).

1. BLITZKRIEG BOP (#1, *Ramones*, 1976) It’s the “Louie Louie” of a generation, but less intelligible! A song so great even the jocks who used to beat us up for listening to it play it at sporting events (but would probably still beat us up for liking it)! A song so great that even the corporations this song was invented to stick it to use it to sell us cell phones! A song so great none of that matters! Hoot mon! AND HOW IT RELATES TO MY PENIS: “Tight” “Kids” “Pulsating” “Shoot” “Back Seat”—truly, this is the Magnetic Poetry™ of our lives!

AND, IN SUMMATION: Wow, this really took a fucking long time to write.

Love,
Norb





WHO ARE YOU?

It's like a mix between vagina and beaver,
it's like your *Vancouver*.

Nardwuar the
Human Serviette
versus
The Scissor Sisters

Nardwuar: Who are you?

Jake: Scissor Sisters.

Nardwuar: And who are you individually? Please introduce yourselves, Scissor Sisters.

Jake Shears: I'm Jake Shears.

Ana Matronic: And my name's Ana Matronic.

Nardwuar: Now, Ana, is it true that your bandmate here, Jake, had his underwear on eBay?

Ana: Oh, yes, he did.

Jake: I didn't put it on eBay though.

Ana: He didn't put it on eBay. The fan, the supposedly huge fan he signed it for, put it on eBay.

Nardwuar: What I was wondering is, Ana, can you identify Jake's underwear? Like how do we know it's Jake's underwear?

Ana: Uh, well, yeah I can. It will be incredibly cheap.

Jake: [laughs] Yeah, I wear very cheap underwear.

Ana: And it will look a little bit bigger than his actual person, 'cause Jake, Jake is a small guy, and I find that even small men's underwear looks...

Jake: Big on me.

Ana: Quite big on you.

Jake: Yeah, I end up, I do a lot of shopping in German 99 cent bargain bins. For underwear. And usually I do take pride in my hideous... pants.

Ana: [laughs]

Nardwuar: So for all the people out there, the fake looks like, the fake underwear looks like...?

Jake: Like?

Nardwuar: The faked! Like the real stuff, you just described, like the real stuff. What would be the "fake" Scissor Sisters underwear?

Ana: Dolce & Gabbana underwear. [laughs] Anything with a like

fancy-shmancy name or anything attached to it.

Jake: Yeah.

Ana: Well, Jake's underwear anyway.

Jake: Yeah.

Nardwuar: So, Scissor Sisters Jake. I was wondering, is it true you always travel with a Sh-peedo?

Ana: [laughs]

Jake: Noooo. Actually, I gave up Speedos.

Nardwuar: But isn't there some sort of thing that you were talking about? How like, you always gotta travel with a Sh-peedo—'cause you never know, at some party you may have to whip it out.

Jake: I used to have Speedos around a lot more I think. I've actually, I've kind of changed to like little, uh, kind of sheer Adidas running shorts, are kind of my... I like lounging around in those a lot more. I'm finding them a lot more sexy than Speedos.

Nardwuar: Weren't there some stories that you talked about? I read in an interview somewhere, where somebody was talking about you, how you were at a party and it was time to go swimming and boom! there was a Speedo. You must've brought the Speedo along.

Jake: Oh, I have been known to bring Speedos to parties, yeah. Especially if there's a jacuzzi. I'm the first in the hot tub.

Nardwuar: And you are Jake and...

Ana: Ana.

Nardwuar: Of the Scissor...

Jake: Sisters.

Nardwuar: And I wondered about the Scissor Sisters. I thought, "Hmm, I wonder what they can help me with?" And I thought, "Maybe they can help me with my fashion?" And maybe they can help me identify what I am wearing right here—and I am wearing this... What is this sweater that I'm wearing? This thing right here. [Nardwuar opens his coat to expose

a wild green '80s styled-sweater] This sweater.

Jake and Ana: Wowww.

Nardwuar: Can you guys identify it? I think it's like some sort of New "Yorkian" thing. Do you guys have any idea about this?

Ana: Well, you know, it's so funny, there was... my sister and I, yesterday, were talking about Wham fashions, 'cause Wham used to have a, uh. This is...

Nardwuar: Like, look at the label: "No New York."

Ana: Yeah, it's like, you've got Elvis Costello, and...

Jake: [in background] That's nice, No New York. That's a beautiful sweater.

Ana: [looking at a picture on the back of the sweater] ...this looks like Buddy Holly. I'm not sure who that is.

Nardwuar: A friend of mine bought this at a garage sale...

Jake: [in background] It's amazing!

Nardwuar: In Vancouver. And she thought it might've been from, like, New York in the '80s. And I mean, have you seen lots of this designer stuff? Is this possibly one of the coolest things you've...

Jake: It's one of—that is honestly one of the coolest cardigan-things I've ever seen.

Nardwuar: And it's like mass-produced! You saw the label, like see the label and...

Jake: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Nardwuar: I'm making Jake touch me here, but, like what's the label?

Ana: [laughs]

Jake: "No New York."

Nardwuar: No New York. And what does it say for the size?

Jake: Uhhh, "One size fits most."

Nardwuar: Yes. So, is this stuff...

Ana: I like that, I like that. It's very egalitarian.

Nardwuar: How hard is it to find stuff like this in New York? Is it everywhere?

Jake: Impossible.

Nardwuar: Really? You don't see

any of it?

Ana: I've never seen anything like that in my life.

Jake: Nooo. Y'know man—as far as, like, finding cool vintage clothes, and thrift store shopping and stuff, you've gotta go to like, y'know, the boondocks. Like, we were just in Salt Lake City and at some thrift store and it was like a gold mine, y'know? I got this amazing—look at this key chain I got. [shows chain] With a...

Ana: [in background] little puppy...

Jake: It's a photograph of a poodle and some woman's hands. You can see an elderly woman's hands, cupping the small teacup poodle. Um, which I really find this is just kinda like a symbol of mortality, because I'm sure the person holding the dog is dead and the dog is probably dead as well. But I thought that was kind of a beautiful, beautiful thing.

Nardwuar: That was a great find.

Ana: It was a great find.

Nardwuar: Also Scissor Sisters, I'm wearing some other thing that represents the Scissor Sisters—which I think is unrepresentative in rock 'n' roll. Not the hair, but, the suspenders. [Nardwuar points to his suspenders, which are worn over his chest hair] You're into the suspenders!

Jake: Love suspenders, yeah.

Ana: Well, and we also love chest hair, which you have copious amounts of as well.

Jake: Yeah.

Nardwuar: I, I, I wasn't trying to display that, but the suspenders and rock 'n' roll...

Jake: Yeah!

Nardwuar: Like, not many people—Rob Halford, he did 'em great, didn't he?

Jake: Yeah, absolutely. I, I, I like the thin braces for me, and then BabyDaddy does them more thick, his suspenders.

Nardwuar: You don't like the thick ones?



Illustrations by Keith Rosson - www.keithrosson.com

Jake: I, I do like them, but they're more for BabyDaddy, definitely.

Nardwuar: Oh, BabyDaddy, your bandmate... So! Scissor Sisters...

Jake and Ana: Yes!

Nardwuar: You've analyzed what I'm wearing, y'know, the suspenders. And the sweater—thanks for trying to help identify it. How 'bout yourself, Jake? You've had some pretty low-riding pants.

Jake: Yeah.

Nardwuar: What's your inspiration behind the low-riders?

Jake: I don't know, I just like, I like, uh... often I don't... I do wear belts sometimes, but I like to... I like hair, I like my belly, I like, um...

Ana: He likes his abs.

Jake: I like my abs.

Nardwuar: Is there somebody you look towards? Like Lux Interior of the band The Cramps?

Jake and Ana: Ahhhh.

Nardwuar: Remember him in *Urgh! A Music War*?

Jake and Ana: Yeah, yeah.

Ana: Well.

Jake: We're big Cramps fans.

Nardwuar: Remember *Urgh! A Music War*?

Ana: Yeah, of course. And, um, uh, New York Dolls, of course, are a huge inspiration in my life. And I think Jake, often, gives a little David Johanson style.

Nardwuar: Because the Lux Interior *Urgh! A Music War* shot of

him wearing those pants, and they're sooo low, and it's about to...

Jake: Oh, yeah, it's about to fall off.

Nardwuar: How low? Has he rode it that low?

Jake and Ana: Oh yeah!

Jake: Yeah, I've shown lots and lots of pubes.

Ana: And also like Lux Interior, he's worn his incredibly tight trousers with high heels, which is a great look, I think.

Jake: It's a really good look. I love good old Lux. Very inspiring. I've seen The Cramps play probably about five times in my lifetime and it's always been a great show.

Nardwuar: And you guys are the Scissor...

Ana: Sisters.

Nardwuar: Have you heard about the Scissor Girls at all?

Ana: Oh, we have! Yes.

Jake: Absolutely, yeah. Scissor Girls, they, um, right when we started Scissor Sisters we heard about Scissor Girls. And I actually met one of the Scissor Girls.

Ana: Oh, really?

Jake: At a Deitch Gallery party in New York. I hung out with one of them.

Nardwuar: 'Cause they're pretty amazing too. Like they're dressed up, totally. Like they look like raccoons sometimes.

Jake: I've never heard the Scissor

Girls' music really. How is it?

Nardwuar: Uh, it's very inspiring, very sort of Chicago-ing.

Ana: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Didn't they tour with Liz Phair? So it's that very sort of like aggressive...

Jake: Female.

Nardwuar: So let's move on, Scissor Sisters, to, My Life With The...

Jake: Thrill Kill Kult.

Nardwuar: Thrill Kill Kult, now I was researching My Life With The...

Ana: Thrill Kill Kult.

Nardwuar: And I found out that most My Life With The...

Jake: Thrill Kill Kult.

Nardwuar: Fan...

Ana: Uh, boys.

Nardwuar: Fanboys, yes, that they are old goths who love Satan.

Jake: Yeah, yeah absolutely.

Nardwuar: So does that symbolize the Scissor Sisters? You guys are old goths that love Satan?

Jake: A little bit, I think. A tiny bit.

Ana: We've got—we've got a goth edge, definitely. Jake, uh, has some goth. One of my favorite bands in the world is Siouxsie And The Banshees. I'm a huuge Siouxsie fan. And, um, and Del our guitar player has a serious goth edge to him.

Jake: We are a little bit goth at heart.

Ana: Yeah. And we're not ashamed.

Jake: Thrill Kill Kult is an incredible band. Totally underrated I think.

Nardwuar: Have you ever seen them live?

Jake: About thirty times. Yeah, a lot. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Is it true you have to wear sunglasses when you see them, because their stage lights are so bright?

Jake: Uh, no I'll tell you something really funny. Last time I saw Thrill Kill Kult was about a year and a half ago in New York City and I was wearing an Adidas baseball cap and a white t-shirt and blue jeans. And it was at Don Hill's in New York. And I was up front with the gothiest goths you've ever seen. And, somehow, Groovy Man, the lead singer of Thrill Kill, fixated on me the whole show and throughout the show stripped himself of all his jewelry and gave it all to me.

Nardwuar: Are you wearing any of it today?

Jake: Not today, but I do have all that—it was an amazing moment. It was very weird. It was almost as if he remembered me from when I was a teenager. I used to follow them around the West Coast, when they toured. I mean, I've seen them so many times. But it was really an amazing moment, because I looked—I was dressed like a... schmoe, y'know what I mean?

Ana: [laughs]

Jake: I didn't look goth at all.

Nardwuar: Maybe he knew you were a true fan, that you were not a poser.

Jake: No, he probably knew I was a true fan because I was singing along to every single lyric.

Nardwuar: You were like a mirror.

Jake: Yeah.

Nardwuar: And you guys are the Scissor...

Ana: Sisters.

Nardwuar: And you're here in Vancouver. Now, do you guys have your own name for Vancouver? I heard you came up with your own name?

Ana: Oh, well we use Vancouver—y'know what, I do have to preface this. I went to high school in Vancouver...

Nardwuar: Washington.

Ana: And, um, we liked to call it The 'Couve, in, in Vancouver.

Jake: [laughs] The Couve, I like that.

Ana: So that's The Couve, but anyway.

Nardwuar: There was another name that you brought up when you played here last time.

Jake: I think Vancouver is a great alternate word for vagina. As in...

Ana: "Show me your Vancouver, baby."

Jake: Yeah.

Nardwuar: And they showed you "your Vancouver."

Jake: Yes, their Vancouver.

Ana: [laughing] Well there's, there's a great deal of beavers in this part of the world, so...

Jake: It's like a mix between vagina and beaver, it's like your Vancouver.

Ana: Yeah. It's good.

Nardwuar: What's interesting...

Jake: And cooch.

Ana: Yeah, yeah, it's all of that, all rolled into one not-very-offensive word.

Jake: Exactly.

Nardwuar: And Scissor Sisters, do you realize that Long John Baldry—not Long Dong—but Long John Baldry lives in Vancouver now?

Ana: Oh, my gosh! I have no idea who that is.

Nardwuar: And you know who Long John Baldry is?

Jake: Nooo.

Nardwuar: He's the guy who discovered Elton...

Ana: John.

Nardwuar: He's the guy who discovered Elton John! The Canadian connection!

Jake and Ana: Wowww.

Jake: Amazing.

Ana: Wow! how 'bout that?

Nardwuar: 'Cause you guys did some "Elton John-ing," didn't you?

Jake and Ana: We did!

Nardwuar: And there's some

more Canadian connections there. Didn't you get to meet Elton John's Canadian boyfriend?

Ana: I think, yes we did! Yeah!

Jake: Yes, we did. We did meet his Canadian boyfriend.

Nardwuar: What was it like, and did he mention he was from Canada?

Jake: He did not mention he was from Canada at that moment, no, but he was very, very nice.

Nardwuar: What was it like doing stuff with Elton John? He was on the news. Did you see that news clip of him recently?

Ana: I, I haven't seen it, but I heard that he was...

Nardwuar: He was yelling out, "You rude, vile pig!" to people, while wearing a tracksuit.

Jake: What was that about? Why?

Ana: [laughing]

Nardwuar: He was just leaving. He was walking in an elevator going, "You rude, vile pig." And I thought, "That's a compliment, isn't it?"

Ana: Yeah.

Jake: To, to like the media? To people chasing him? Oh well, you know.

Jake: Yeah, I've shown lots and lots of pubes.
Ana: And also like Lux Interior, he's worn his incredibly tight trousers with high heels, which is a great look, I think.

Ana: Good! Good!

Nardwuar: "You rude, vile pig!" I think that's awesome!

Ana: Yeah!

Jake: He's amazing. He's been so great to us, and is a lot of fun to hang around, and I just love—I love being around him and talking with him.

Nardwuar: But was he wearing a tracksuit when you guys were hanging with him?

Ana: Yes! He was.

Jake: An amazing tracksuit. A beautiful tracksuit.

Ana: I think it was like a Yohji Yamamoto tracksuit.

Nardwuar: He didn't look too good on TV in the tracksuit.

Jake: Well, he looks great in person.

Ana: You know, that's his leisure wear. He was trying to be at leisure and I think people were pestering him.

Jake: It's brilliant when, y'know, he comes out when he's performing now, his encores he comes out in a tracksuit, which I love.

Ana: Oh does he?

Jake: Yes! He comes out in the tracksuit for his encore, which I think is so hot. With a big diamond

necklace—it's not big actually. It's little, you have to kind of get up close to see it—but, it just says "fuck off" across it in diamonds.

Ana: And then he's got, he's got a Vivian Westwood sort of phallus earring, dangling from his ear.

Jake: He's fierce.

Ana: Also really quite subversive.

Nardwuar: So, "rude, vile pig"—is that a compliment, if he likes, y'know, having "fuck off" on his chest and stuff like that?

Jake: I don't know. If Elton called me a "rude, vile pig" I'd probably cry. [laughs]

Nardwuar: It's a compliment!

Jake: No, I wouldn't be crying out of happiness, I'd be kind of sad actually.

Ana: I think it all depends on the intonation in which you say rude vile pig 'cause you could say [in sweet voice] "Oh, you're just a rude vile pig" and then it's all nice and stuff.

Nardwuar: You Scissor Sisters have it real good don't you?

Ana: [laughs] Well, for the most part.

Nardwuar: I love this quote, Jake. "Tonight I get to meet Peter Gabriel."

Jake: Oh yeah, yeah.

Nardwuar: I love that. You appreciate it. Like, "Tonight I get to meet Peter Gabriel!"

Jake: He was so nice and he put on such a great show. We got to play with him in France on the side of this beautiful river which I think I called a lake in front of the audience. [laughs] I don't think they were very happy.

Ana: It wasn't a lake?

Jake: No.

Ana: Oh, it was a river?

Jake: Yeah. [laughs]

Nardwuar: I mean, Elton John, and you get to meet Peter Gabriel and then Bono kissed your ring?

Ana: He didn't actually kiss my ring.

Jake: He kissed your hand.

Ana: He kissed my hand, yes, and he was very nice. And I thought, "I'm supposed to be kissing your ring. You're the pope of rock'n'roll. C'mon man." [laughs]

Nardwuar: So all these people are so nice, all these über-celebs, but then Kylie (Minogue) let you down a bit didn't she, Jake?

Jake: How?

Nardwuar: I thought she axed your tracks (that you wrote for her).

They were gonna be on her album.

Jake: Don't believe everything you read. They just announced that it's the next single.

Nardwuar: No!

Jake: Yes.

Nardwuar: The Scissor Sistering! Are you a part of that too Ana?

Ana: I sadly have not met Kylie yet.

Nardwuar: What? Why?

Ana: Well.

Nardwuar: Why?

Ana: [laughs] It's Jake and BabyDaddy, who are the main production team of Scissor Sisters. They were in the studio with Kylie and, ya know, I think she would probably just make my inferiority complex soar with her tiny perfection. I could hold her in my hands.

Jake: She's a lovely woman.

Nardwuar: So Jake doesn't like to share then.

Ana: Um, no not really. [laughs]

Jake: I'm a very sharing person.

Nardwuar: The tracks are back on. Kylie and Scissor Sisters are back on, they're not off.

Jake: Parlophone just announced that they're releasing it as her Christmas single. I'm very excited.

That was just a bunch of rumors.

Nardwuar: Winding up here Scissor Sisters, you guys played the Cock. Is that true? You really played the Cock?

Ana: Oh yeah.

Jake: Well we played the Cock in New York and London.

Nardwuar: There's a London Cock too?

Ana: There is. It's inspired by the New York Cock.

Nardwuar: And was there a Fat Cock too?

Jake: Yes there was a Fat Cock. I used to go go dance at the Fat Cock actually.

Ana: And you know the guy who used to run the Fat Cock, I just saw in an ad for Listerine, those little strip things, and he's on a woman's shoulder sleeping like this.

Jake: Who's that?

Ana: Mario.

Jake: Oh really?

Ana: Yeah. [laughs]

Nardwuar: So when you were go go dancing, what sort of things did you do? Did you once go go dance with live sharks in a pool? That sounds pretty scary.

Jake: I did. Ya know, there was a cute go go dancer in the shark tank and I took off my clothes and got in the shark tank with him.

Nardwuar: That's going far isn't it?

Ana: Yeah, Jake will go all the way.

Jake: I wasn't working that night, really. I was just having fun.

Nardwuar: That's pretty wild. What are your tips for being, quote, "a go go dancer" [clears throat], a stripper? How do you earn the most money?

Jake: Just going for it and just dancing and having fun and not necessarily being lewd or lascivious or, you know. What word am I looking for?

Ana: Distasteful. [Laughs]

Jake: Yeah! I always kept it wholesome and I think that's almost sexier sometimes than going the full monty.

Nardwuar: Speaking of the full monty, Boy George. You guys must have run into him. I think he's come to some of your gigs.

Jake: Yeah he's come to our gigs and I hung out with him in New York a couple times.

Nardwuar: I wanted to do an interview with him but they wouldn't let me. They said he was too shy. Is he really too shy?

Jake: He's a little bit shy. He's a really nice guy. I think he's great. He's been living in New York for a while and I always enjoy hanging out with him.

Nardwuar: Did he really do it with the guy from Bush, Gavin from Bush?

Jake: I don't know.

Nardwuar: That was the rumor in that book, that he actually did it with the guy from Bush.

Jake: I'm not sure. More power to him if he did. That's cool. I wonder if Gwen was in on it.

Ana: Hot.

Nardwuar: [Reading] "There has never been a gay rocker that was out before they were famous." Is that true?

Ana: Jobriath is probably the only one, but he wasn't very successful sadly.

Jake: Yeah Jobriath flopped. I don't know. Is that true?

Nardwuar: That's what I've been reading about you guys. People are writing about you saying there has never been a gay rocker that was out before they were famous and it's up to the Scissor Sisters to lead the way for that, and I thought "Wow!"

Jake: It could be a farce. If it is, that's a cool thing.

Nardwuar: And they're test marketing you in the U.K. That's what they said. Is that true?

Jake: No. I wouldn't say they're test marketing at all. Polydor, when they picked us up, they knew exactly what they were doing. They did take a risk with us but it was a chance they fully committed to and they did an amazing job in the U.K.

Ana: That's where we signed our



record deal, in England. So the record came out there first and I think the American record labels were apprehensive about what to do with us because a lot of our songs sound different from one another. We've got a very wide-ranging musical style so they didn't know what to do with us. So they kind of wanted to see how it went in England before they brought it over here. That's why it came out here six months after.

Jake: Really, we signed to a British record label first off and that's why it ended up coming out in the U.K. first.

Nardwuar: Winding up here, a couple quick questions. Just one answer. Just a couple quick questions. Just one last thing. You mentioned living in Manhattan Island, or Long Island, or one of those islands. Did you once live in a weird theatre sort of thing? I was reading about that.

Jake: Yeah. Crazy. You're a good researcher. I didn't even know this stuff comes out. I used to live in this weird underground kind of basement apartment that used to be a black box theatre on Bleeker Street.

Nardwuar: I was fascinated by it. Is there a lot of stuff like that in New York?

Jake: Yeah, people live in very...

Nardwuar: I thought it was de-Giuliani-ized, they got rid of all those neat theatres.

Ana: You can try. I'm sure there's a lot of things left over that even Giuliani couldn't find.

Jake: There were no windows in this place and it had been a black box theatre. I lived in this room with these two other guys. They built these walls but they didn't go to the ceiling so it was like we all had these cubicles.

Nardwuar: Were any movies still around?

Jake: Uh, movies?

Nardwuar: What sort of theatre was it?

Jake: I don't know. The theatre had long been gone.

Nardwuar: Were there any old remnants left behind?

Jake: Yeah, there was. There was this whole pulley system in there that was still in the place.

Ana: So it was probably a live theatre. You didn't find any old print of *Deep Throat* lying around or anything?

Jake: No, it wasn't a movie theatre. They put on plays, but there was still this whole pulley system.

Nardwuar: That could have been used for some fun, eh?

Jake: Totally. [everyone laughs]

Nardwuar: Scissor Sisters, winding up here. I'm going to be doing an interview shortly with The Libertines. They're also coming to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Do you

have any secret messages to The Libertines? You ever met them before?

Ana: Sadly, no.

Jake: I had an experience with Pete Doherty once. He's not with them at this moment. But yeah, send them our love please. I'm glad they're still touring and still going for it. It's a good thing.

Ana: You can let them know that if they ever need hugs, we're here for them.

Nardwuar: You have great stage banter and I just want to leave you with this quote. Ana, I'm not sure if you said it, if Jake said it, or if somebody else said it. "If you have no room to wiggle your ass, jump up and down like you're chewing gum between your buttcheeks and blow some bubbles if you want."

Ana: I believe that was me.

[laughs] Yes. It comes from a joke that was a very, sort of, gross joke involving a diet. Instead of putting everything in her mouth, she put it in the other end and she goes to the doctor and she's like, "There's no side effects." And he's like, "Why are you bouncing up and down?" She's like, "Oh I'm just chewing gum."

Nardwuar: Well, thanks very much Scissor Sisters. Anything else you wanna add for the people out there at all?

Jake: Uhhhh, Ana?

Ana: Um.

Nardwuar: Why should people care about the Scissor Sisters? Why should people care?

Jake: Because we care about you.

Ana: Because we are pro-orca and we vote.

Jake: [Laughs]

Nardwuar: Well, thanks very much Scissor Sisters. Keep on rockin' in the free world and doot doola doot doot...

Jake and Ana: ...doot doo!

To hear this interview please visit www.nardwuar.com

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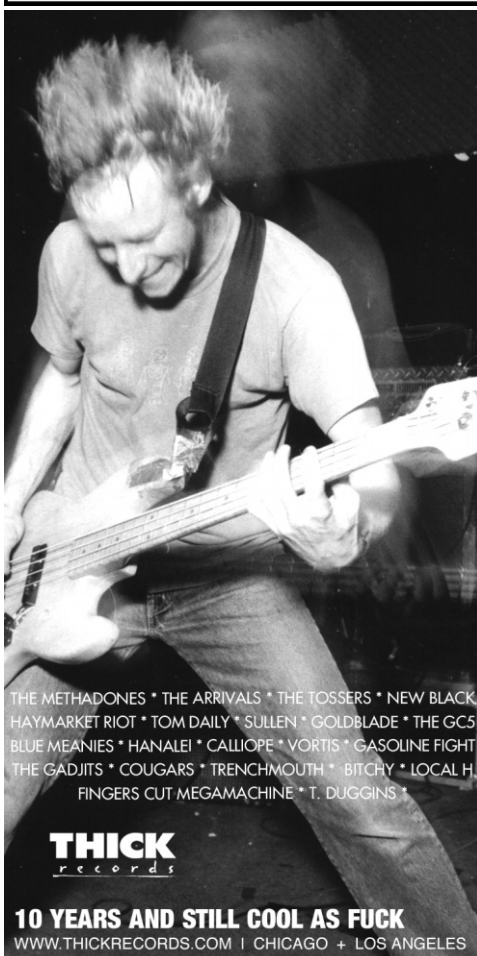
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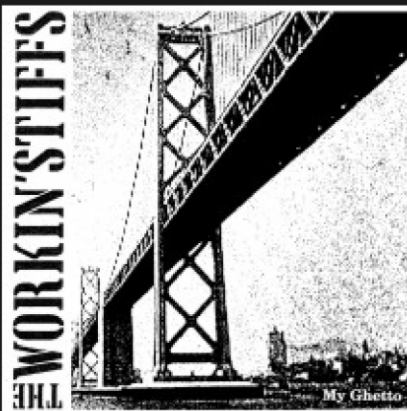


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Never-before published picture of Steve Jones at an after-party
show, circa '82. Photo by Victor Gonzales

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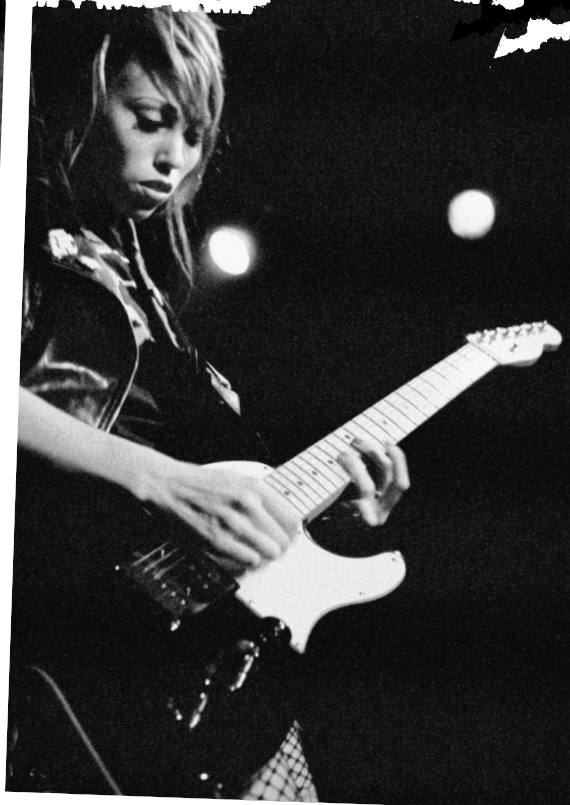


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ULTRAMAN



Reunited punk bands are everywhere these days and pretty much fall into two categories: amazing and awful. Punk doesn't leave much room to hide if you're just fucking around, and no one looks sillier than a hardcore act that's stopped caring. Ultraman, on the other hand, is a rare type of group: an old-school hardcore outfit that makes younger bands on the bill—and other albums in your collection—sound flat.

Legendary figures on the '80s St. Louis punk scene, Ultraman broke up in 1991 but reunited in 1999. Today's lineup features original lead-singer Tim Jamison and original guitarist Rob Wagoner, who first worked together in another hardcore band called White Suburban Youth. Bassist John John and drummer Mark Deniszuk were also in the band during its first run. The other guitarist, Bob Fancher, is the one new member. The group's latest album, *The Constant Weight of Zero*, is a worthy successor to its overpowering early work. The fury and the sense of alienation are as strong as ever, with lyrics that get right to the core of the outsider's existence. Less reliant on thrashy speed than in years past, Ultraman plays hardcore that hits on many levels, always with savage force. In this conversation, Tim Jamison, voice of Ultraman and (full disclosure) *Razorcake* contributor, talks about the first years of the St. Louis punk scene, the various incarnations of the band, and the importance of never becoming Green Day.

RAZORCAKE 40

Chris: When and how did you decide that you wanted to sing in a punk band when you grew up?

Tim: I don't think I really "decided." It was sort of a pure accident. Rob Wagoner, the guitar player, decided he wanted to start a band, and I couldn't play anything so, by default, I was the singer. And I'd been writing. I just sort of, for some reason, started writing shorter and shorter things. So I had all this crap to use for lyrics.

Chris: What kind of writing were you doing before then?

Tim: Ever since I was a little kid, I wrote short stories. I just kind of got away from it.

Chris: Could you talk about the early days of the St. Louis punk scene?

Tim: There were many different sections of the early days [laughs]. The time before I was even going to shows—it was '79 to '82, '83—it was mostly just new wave. I knew about it, but had no way to get to it. Most of the shows, too, were 21-and-up only. There were some shows that came through that I wish I could have seen: 999 came through here, the Dickies came through here, Hüsker Dü. The Ramones apparently played at 4th and Pine, which was an old bank. I guess my first show was March of '83. I saw the Circle Jerks at the Lindell Club, which was in a run-down, fleabag hotel, basically. There was a little lounge they had in the basement: no stage, shag carpet, mirrored walls, one of

**INTERVIEW BY
CHRIS PEPUS**

**LIVE PHOTOS BY
DOUG TERAMURA**

those little fireplaces in the middle of the room. The Circle Jerks set up in the corner with a giant PA.

Chris: What was the response to punk on the part of city authorities?

Tim: Well, White Suburban Youth's first show (1984), it was very negative. The vice squad raided it, because one of the fliers for the show apparently said, "Bring your fake I.D." So that was kind of a clue for the police. But I think they were also just messin' with the guy who owned the club. We went on and played our first show ever. We ended. Then the Offenders came on. About three or four songs into their set, I saw a uniformed cop walk through the room and he stood by the back wall, and I thought, that's not a good sign. Then, all of a sudden, the power went off on the stage and I heard a cop yell: "If you're over twenty-one, stand over here: you're leaving. If you're under twenty-one, stand over here: you're going to jail." And I was nineteen. But the rule was, for whatever reason, if you were in a band, you didn't go to jail. You were supposed to be there.

Chris: St. Louis punk fans usually have to go to Chicago to see touring acts. Has there ever been

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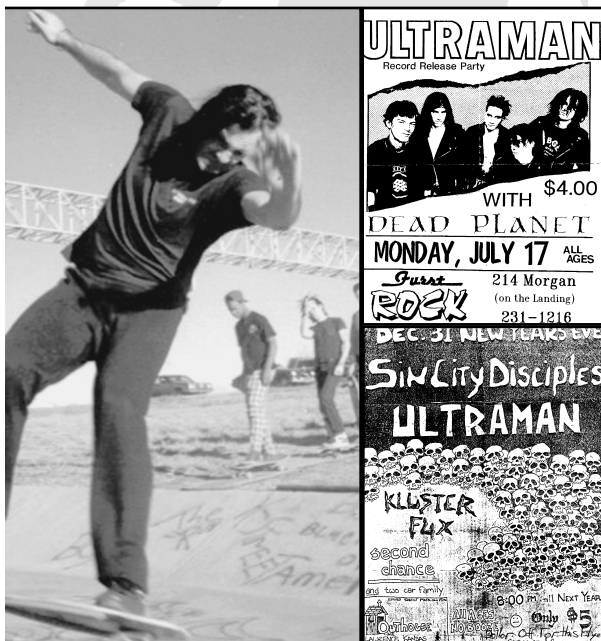
much contact between the St. Louis and Chicago scenes? Was, say, Naked Raygun big here in their day?

Tim: Yeah, they'd do pretty well here. But the only band we ever hooked up with from Chicago was Life Sentence. They actually turned out to be a great connection, because in the summer of 1987, we played with them at the Sports Palace. Joe Losurdo gave me a notebook page full of names and numbers of places to call and play shows out of town. It was great. That's when we started playing out more. But Naked Raygun played here, I guess, three or four times. White Suburban Youth played its very last show with Naked Raygun. But other than that, there was never really much contact. You would think there would be, being five hours away. They just had their own thing. That was that. We couldn't bust in.

Chris: Of course, one of the big stories of any punk scene of that era was the rise of hardcore. How did that come about here and what role did White Suburban Youth and Ultraman play in it?

Tim: It's weird. I do remember reading in *Jet Lag*, the local underground 'zine, about this "us against them" attitude they had toward what they called "thrash": that it wasn't really music. That crowd was much older—they were in their mid-twenties. We were all seventeen, eighteen, nineteen-years-old. I guess '84 was when hardcore really took off. We played a lot of parties during that time. There weren't that many shows. What would happen a lot of times is that kids whose parents had money, their parents would send them to California, and they'd come back with records from L.A. A lot of times, that was how it would happen. Word got out, spread through different people going to other cities, and coming back here. One thing about the smaller shows: you would know

ULTRAMAN FLYERS FROM WAY BACK WHEN (BELOW)



BY SUMMER, I'M OUT EVERY NIGHT, HANGING OUT WITH PEOPLE WHO WERE GETTIN' HAMMERED, SMOKIN' POT, DOIN' COKE AND HUFFIN' FREON—EVERYTHING YOU COULD THINK OF—AND IT WAS THE BEST TIME I EVER HAD. I WAS STILL A STRAIGHT-EDGE KID, BUT THEY DIDN'T CARE.



everyone there by name. The bigger shows, you would get the west-county "trendy kids," as we called them. (The west county area is home to some of the farther reaches of suburban "white flight" from St. Louis's downtown section. Just about everyone in the St. Louis area who lives east of west county [and therefore closer to the city] makes fun of the westsiders and the ridicule is often deserved.) A weird crowd of jocks would show up, too, at Black Flag shows, just jocks wanting to punch people. I don't know how they even knew about Black Flag. A show like Black Flag, you'd have maybe 500 or 600 people. Then Samhain and Verbal Abuse would come through, and there'd be twelve, all within the same month.

Chris: Could you tell me about the transition from White Suburban Youth to Ultraman?

Tim: Well, the drummer for White Suburban Youth had gone on to join Culture Shock (The band that Dick from the Subhumans UK had before Citizen Fish.) He was sort of an odd character in the first place. I don't know how to put it, but he wasn't, you know, a punk punk. He loved the Grateful Dead. Me and (guitarist) Rob were thinking, yeah, this isn't working. So Mike Daskocil starting talking about, first of all, producing us. We were like: "Produce us? I don't know what you mean." So we thought maybe we should ask him to play drums because he was an amazing drummer. The bass-player for White Suburban

Youth was ten to fifteen years older than us too, and he was always getting arrested and hocking his gear to pay parking tickets. So we thought, let's get rid of this guy too. We added John Corcoran, who played bass. So we just kind of morphed into a new band in '86. We still played a lot of White Suburban Youth songs. In fact, to this day we still do. "Egg Boy" is a White Suburban Youth song.

Chris: Some of Ultraman's early songs remind me a little of Rik L. Rik. Who were your biggest influences?

Tim: I loved the Stranglers, early Ultravox, Black Flag. The Adolescents were one of my favorite bands ever, 999, Sham 69, Cockney Rejects. Just really late-'70s, early-'80s English punk and oi, and American hardcore. Articles of Faith was another band that I loved. The music that sort of shifted gears for us away from the super-fast, thrashy stuff was Marginal Man and Rites of Spring. Those were bands that came out—we never saw either band, but they and Gray Matter were the reason we changed directions—in the summer of '85. We thought, wow, you don't have to play super-fast. Also, Rob was learning to play guitar and learning to write at the same time. As his talent progressed, so did our music.

Chris: In the never-ending debate over who was Black Flag's best lead singer, you side with Rollins. What do you say to Keith Morris's many partisans?

Tim: Everybody has their own taste, but I just think Rollins was the better singer. I mean, Keith, a little whiny, a little nasally. I like the Circle Jerks, you know, but come on, man, Black Flag—that was it. You can't put anything that they did before *Damaged* up against *Damaged* and have it win. *Damaged* is just the best record and that's Rollins singing. He was full-on, even if he was a total jerk, which he could be. This is one of my favorite moments actually. It was a Black Flag show in Columbia, Missouri. Of course, there was no pit, because it's Columbia and it's a bunch of hippy punks and they're just standing there, so we just kind of went along and stood there. I was standing next to the two guys when this happened. This one dude spit on Henry. It landed on his chest. Henry freaked—of course, that's what you do when people spit on you. And he said: "Who did that?! Who did that?!" And the guy who did it didn't say anything. This other guy standing next to him said, "I did it." Rollins said, "I'll meet you outside after the show!" There were twenty of us out back waiting and he never

came out. But I think in *Get in the Van* he says he did go out and fight the guy. He did not! He never came outside. Give me a break: I was there and I don't drink. I remember. You never came out. I mean I wouldn't either. The dude was huge.

Chris: Tell me about recording your 1990 album *Non-Existence*.

Tim: That was actually great. That time period was the high point, I think—that lineup, with Matt Smith playing guitar. I guess he joined the band in February of '90. We had a guitar player—Pat Hercules had played for a while—but it was hard to be in Ultraman, because we were all distinct, strong, solid personalities. If you didn't have that going in yourself, you weren't gonna make it. The recording was great, compared to the first album (*Freezing Inside*) because Nicky Garratt (UK Subs) was producing, and San Francisco is much more relaxed than New York City. We had a little more time, two extra days: four, total, instead of two.

Chris: Why did Ultraman break up in 1991?

Tim: Oh, the usual stuff: hated each other, worn

out, tired, foreheads bleeding from the beating against the wall. The last couple of years, it was obvious that (drummer) Mark Deniszuk wanted to go in a different direction as far as the music went.

Chris: What direction was that?

Tim: Uh, not Ultraman [laughs]. How do I put this politely? Lame. I got the impression that he really wanted to be a rock star. You know: you're sleeping on floors, driving around. You really are beating your head against a wall. And all these bands are getting signed, putting records out, seemingly making money. But we weren't. We were signed, putting records out, but we weren't making any money. He wanted to go somewhere that we couldn't go. We weren't gonna be Green Day—that's really what it was. I blame Green Day. Their album came out in late '89 or early '90, and I remember hearing it and thinking, "Yeah, it's okay." He loved it. It was just too mellow for me. It wasn't punk rock. It was sort of like the band your girlfriend'll like, which they were. We went to see them. It was 200 girls. I looked around me going: "Oh, I was right. This is what they are." The last four songs we wrote, Mark wrote because Rob quit writing music, and I hated every single one of those songs. I said, "Okay, I'll do these songs, but man, they've got no energy." In the spring of '91—I'll never forget—Mark said, "Why don't you try singing?" I was like, "Are you not aware of what band you are in right now?" That really irritated me, but the irony is now that I guess I do sort of sing more than I scream. It took me about ten years, but I thought, oh, I guess I'll try that.

[The interview took place in a St. Louis restaurant and, at this point, we were surrounded by mob of star-struck teenagers. One of them had pointed to where we were sitting and shouted: "Look everybody! It's a picture of Robert Plant!" Plant's picture hung on the wall behind our booth.]

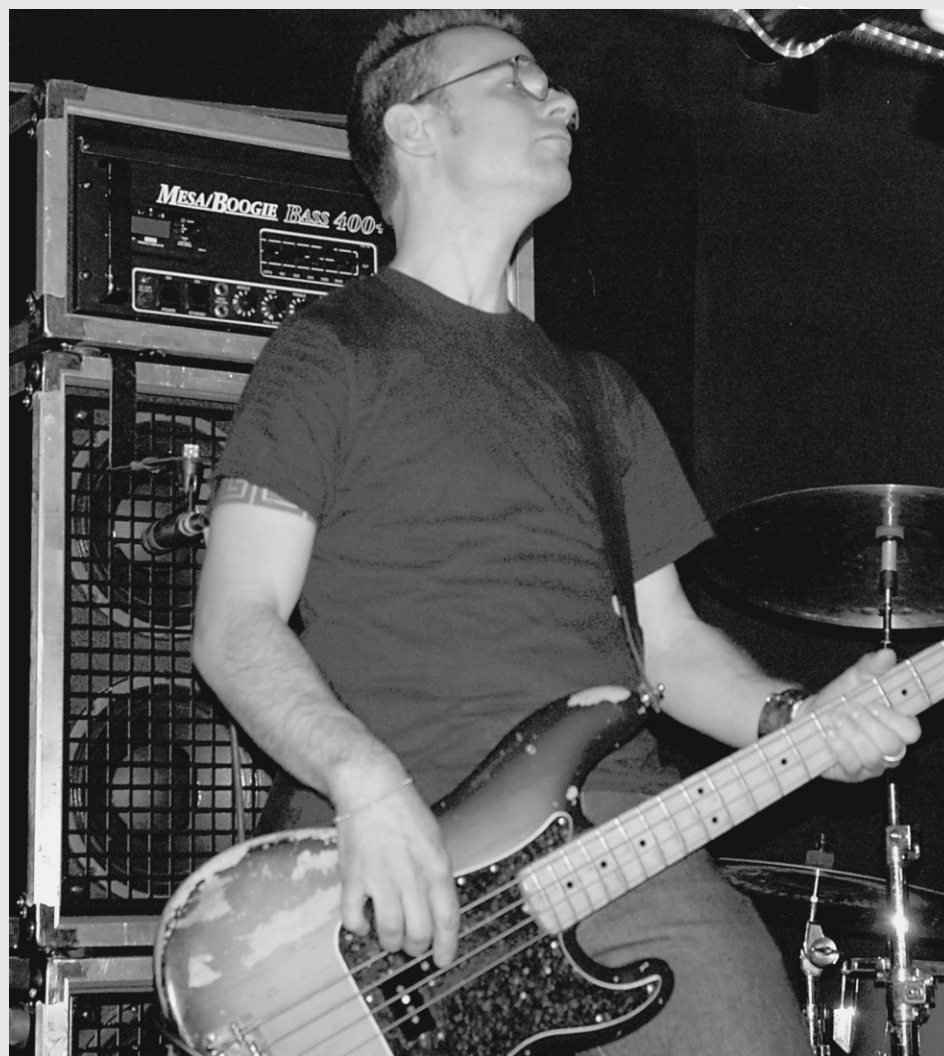
Chris: How did you decide to re-form Ultraman?

Tim: That was my decision. I did three bands in between '91 and '98. Krissy Fit, which is on the new record, those five songs, that was all ex-Ultraman members. If I'd really thought about it, I probably just would have called it Ultraman, but if I'd called it Ultraman, Mike Doskocil wouldn't have played drums. He said, "I don't want to do Ultraman again." But it didn't really last, maybe six months, and Mike was seriously into heroin, although him on heroin was much easier to deal with than him not on heroin. It made him a regular person. He'd talk at regular pace; he seemed clear-headed.

Chris: You know this is on the record?

Tim: Oh yeah. I'd say it to anybody. I'd say it to him. We were also doing the Ultraman reunion shows, with the lineup of the last four months of '91, with Rick Ulrich playing guitar and John Corcoran playing bass. We did a ten-year show in '96. That's when I really wanted to

I WENT FROM THE KID WHO DIDN'T FIT IN TO THE OLD GUY WHO DOESN'T FIT IN.



do it again, because all the crap was gone. We got together and it was just talkin' about old times and it was a trip down memory lane and no one's mad at each other. It was a pleasurable experience and it went off really well. Six hundred people showed up. We did a show with Rancid a week later, and that was amazing because no one knew who we were. It was a Rancid crowd: fourteen-year-old kids with mohawks from West County who had no idea who we were. And they're asking, "Are you guys on Epitaph?" That made me think, well, maybe we should do this. But I wanted to play new songs. It was never my intention just to play the old songs and milk that. I was tired of them before we broke up. But the other old band members didn't go for it. As time went on, towards the end of '98, Bob Fancher—he's a guitar-player and he had a band called For the Last Time—and they just blew me away. I thought, he gets it; he gets the combination of punk rock power and melody. The two together just make perfect music for me. And Bob wasn't just a kid who had no contact with the past. I remember him when he was thirteen or fourteen going to shows in '87-'88, and he was the little drunk kid. I remembered him because I



ALL OF A SUDDEN, THE POWER WENT OFF ON THE STAGE AND I HEARD A COP YELL: "IF YOU'RE OVER TWENTY-ONE, STAND OVER HERE: YOU'RE LEAVING. IF YOU'RE UNDER TWENTY-ONE, STAND OVER HERE: YOU'RE GOING TO JAIL." AND I WAS NINETEEN.

used to talk to him all the time. He was hilarious, even then. So finally I just asked him, "Hey, do you want to be in Ultraman?" He said, "Totally." We got John John to play bass, of course. I explained to Bob, "You've just got to remember, you already know the elements: the power, the hooks. Just dark—keep it dark." He wrote two songs right off the bat, and I went, "Perfect."

Chris: When did Rob Wagoner rejoin the band?

Tim: We had that lineup for about two years, and then our second guitarist Tim O'Saben went back to his former band, and he said: "You should call Rob. I think he'll do it." I said: "Man, I don't think so. Rob has said no to me so many times, I've lost count." But I called him up and, right off the bat, he said, "Yeah, I'll do it." When I got off the phone, I was so stoked.

Chris: It's a cliché that punk songs deal with alienation and isolation, but the songs on your new album, *The Constant Weight of Zero*, really do go deeply into those subjects. Could you talk about some of the things you were responding to when you wrote the lyrics to those songs?

Tim: Oh, man. I typically write in a vague way for a purpose, so to answer that question is hard. It was the same thing from the beginning, even. It's just that you're older, I guess. I haven't changed in a lot of ways, but I hope I've changed in at least in some ways. I still skate-

board and play punk rock, so in a lot of ways, I'm still eighteen. You're right: I get that same feeling. It dates back to being thirteen. I guess every kid feels that way, but I've made it, for me, a practical solution to things I just didn't care to look at or deal with. When I was thirteen—I had gotten my first skateboard at twelve—all my friends skated. They were all a year older than me, so when they all hit junior high, they started smoking pot and drinking beer, and I was like, "You're dumb!"

Chris: [About to take a drink of beer] Hey!

Tim: [Laughs] From thirteen to twenty-one, I was probably the most angry straight edge kid you'd ever meet. I didn't know I was straight edge at thirteen, but I was. So I just left. I said, "See ya," and I didn't hang out with anybody until White Suburban Youth when I was nineteen. In high school, I talked to maybe one or two kids who were into The Clash, but there weren't many of those at my high school. I met Rob when he was a junior and I was a senior in a radio production class. I still didn't hang out; all I did was skateboard by myself. When we started playing out, I was actually really resistant. I didn't want anything to do with the scene. I said: "Screw it. This is our deal. I want nothing to do with the crowd." I was very anti-social. By summer, I'm out every night, hanging out with people who were gettin' hammered, smokin' pot, doin' coke and huffin'

freon—everything you could think of—and it was the best time I ever had. I was still a straight-edge kid, but they didn't care. It was a thing in punk rock to be. I guess some of that's still lingering. I still don't really fit. I went from the kid who didn't fit in to the old guy who doesn't fit in. When we opened for Good Riddance, that crowd of kids probably had never seen us or heard of us. We were getting the feeling that the crowd was wondering why someone's dad was on-stage yelling at them. "Why is someone's dad on-stage with a microphone? He's turning purple." Yeah, I guess that theme's still running through there. Hopefully, it's a little more mature.

Chris: What are the band's immediate plans?

Tim: They're all immediate plans. We don't make long-term plans. We've got a couple shows coming up: one with Only Crime at the Creepy Crawl and one with the UK Subs. We're just going to keep writing and recording. I've put together a crazy scheme to play a few shows in LA, but I'm not sure if that's going to happen. Right now, I just want to play these shows we've got booked, practice and record, write some new songs. Keep doing it for as long as I can, which is what my attitude was fifteen years ago. I'll do this for as long as it lasts and when it ends, it ends.



RAZORCAKE 43

Pop a Beer and Start the Revolution... Punk in Movies

article by
Speedway Randy



A wide shot of a supermarket filled with generic labels: food, drink, corn flakes, beer.

"Doo-do doo dod d dodo do do do do do. Feeling 7-Up, I'm feeling 7-Up. Feeling 7-Up, I'm feeling 7-Up. It's a crisp refreshing feeling. Crystal clear and light. America's drinking 7-Up, and it sure feels right."

Otto starts screaming at his co-worker Kevin to stop singing. Kevin insists he's not singing. Their boss comes up and accuses them of being lazy. Otto tells him to fuck off and throws Kevin into a can display.

I am fifteen years old when I see this. The first few minutes of *Repo Man* (1984) said everything I needed as a teenager: the Reagan decade is white, homogenous and sick and we've got to fight back. Commercials tell us what is good and provide our daily soundtrack. The songs on the *Repo* soundtrack hit the same notes: the disparity of the American dream, poisoned by television, enforced by the police, religious parents putting kids in shitty jobs. Iggy Pop even read the script before writing the now-classic title song.

There are a handful of punk movies that have survived the first punk explosion and are relatively easy to find and rent. Movies that got more right about punk rock—maybe even helped push it along—than ones that failed miserably (*Dudes* and *SLC Punk* to name just two).

If you haven't seen these films, I highly suggest you find them and rent them. After all, punk's not dead. And if you know all the quotes and songs, now is a good time to revisit some of the reasons why our scene started, especially as Reaganomics seems to be coming back into favor.

Growing up in a small western town in the 1980s, the culture from the coasts wasn't always on the forefront. Worse, bands on tour would never stop in Grand Junction. I think the **RAZORCAKE 44** only concert in ten years there

was The Scorpions opening up for ZZ Top. Amusing but brainless.

Once I finally clued in to punk rock, I started picking up cassette tapes wherever I could find them. But just hearing the music was still very insular. It wasn't until I started seeing punk rock in movies that I could understand the larger part of the picture. Watching films like *Repo Man*, *The Decline of Western Civilization* (1981) and *Suburbia* (1984) brought it all together. Punk rock was much more than playing fast and wearing the right clothes. It was a philosophy of disenfranchised kids, a way to think and move forward. Plus, all our parents hated it.

I would be hard pressed to think anyone touching these pages is not familiar with the *Repo* soundtrack—but just in case it's fallen through the cracks of your purchasing schedule—it's an essential building block for anyone even barely interested in punk rock. Infamous Los Angeles bands sing about 1980s ethics and concerns. Black Flag tackles television, The Circle Jerks question military coups, Iggy Pop explores the lurid world of repo men who steal possessions legally, Suicidal Tendencies fight against mental illness, Fear wants to start a war in New Jersey, and The Plugz add the flavor that makes LA interesting. For some reason, a perfect Modern Lovers song is covered by someone else.

Besides a killer soundtrack, *Repo Man* is a time capsule of all those same topics. Disenfranchised suburban youth decompose in big city downtown, stealing pills and cars for fun as much as for money. Those may be the two staples that made this metropolis exist in that decade. Conspiracy theory, aliens, "dianetix," time machines, the F.B.I., and other reasons why the world is out of our hands. The terrifying imminent nuclear war. John Wayne was a fag.

What keeps the film timeless is the dialogue. This movie is so quotable that the com-

mentary track on the DVD is 75% of the cast and crew saying the lines along with the film and laughing.

Two essential punk rock films came from the same director, Penelope Spheeris. *The Decline of Western Civilization* and *Suburbia* are time capsules. The bands were long gone by the time I saw them (or at least, should have quit by then) but I could live in the moment. *Decline* chronicles the Los Angeles scene circa 1980 through the interviews and/or performances of the bands X, Black Flag (Chavo-era), The Circle Jerks, The Alice Bag Band, Catholic Discipline, The Germs, and Fear. All the positive and negative parts of the scene are in full force, as the bands struggle day to day but succeed in playing gigs and getting albums out.

Two genius parts of *Decline* are in the stylistic choices. Showing that the music scene is only as important as the people living inside of it, tons of interview time is given to the punk rock kids in LA, talking about the bands, with a lot of time devoted to fighting, girls, and cops. It was something I could relate to, even in the middle of nowhere. The other choice was to print the lyrics of one song by each band as they played. These aren't the 1970s hits about girls and love and sunny afternoons. These are documentary lyrics about the weirdness in our lives, union songs, songs about depression, getting loaded, fucking, neglect from older generations, and fighting either the system or each other.

Suburbia is sort of Spheeris' melodrama version of her documentary. A teenager runs away from his suburban home and drunk single mother, finding a new type of family in a punk rock community. Joining up with the "TR" (The Rejected) kids, he goes to shows, steals food from garages, while dodging local rednecks and the cops. In the end, the kids can't escape fully from society and its ills. Although it's a so-so movie in terms of filmmaking and believability, watching it as a teenager, it was gospel. The



The first few minutes of *Repo Man* said everything I needed as a teenager: the Reagan decade is white, homogenous and sick and we've got to fight back.

vivid performances by D.I., T.S.O.L. and The Vandals are still exciting. The kids are the kind of bastards you love. Steal what you need. Tell people what you think. All with a frontier justice to defend each other.

In *Decline* and *Suburbia*, the most jarring thing to see was the lack of separation between "fans" and the bands. Usually bands played on the floor, and if they played on the stage the crowd was more than welcome. And although kids had a celebrity type of reverence for the bands, they would also throw their beer at them to bond. No rock stars. Anyone could do this. And if you look in the crowd, you will see the members of the other bands playing that night.

Continuing in the apparent tradition of half-performance, half-reality show of punk movies is *X: The Unheard Music* (1986). Following all four members (Exene, John Doe, Billy Zoom and DJ Bonebrake) equally, the documentary interviews X in their own houses, giving a peek into their personalities. Live shows are covered with actual good sound and lighting. There is also a nice acoustic rendition of a Hank Williams song by Exene and Doe. Zoom gets deep about scooters. Bonebrake does an incredible display of how to keep a beat with all four extremities.

Rather than a bunch of songs strung together, *X*, the film, is inventive. One sequence of old punk photos are scanned through over one song. "The Unheard Music" plays over an incredible sequence of a house being moved by semi through the streets of LA late at night. The filmmakers set up cameras at different street

corners and inside the house itself, staring out the windows as the city creeps by. Delving into the business of it all, *X* the documentary observes the often ridiculous music industry. The difference between Slash Records (ten employees and quality music) and MCA (900 employees, no economic sense and hilariously bad bands) is laid out. The head of Elektra comes off as an untalented Jerry Lewis.

The Unheard Music is about a great band but also the beauty of everyday moments. It shows talented people as real people instead of bullshit celebrities.

The last piece in my punk rock puzzle growing up was *Another State of Mind* (1984), a low-budget road documentary following Youth Brigade and Social Distortion on a do-it-yourself tour. Through great live shows, personality bonding and grinding, and a bus that everyone knows won't make the trip, the film goes over tons of highs and lows. Regardless of the tour imploding with the bus, *Another State* is incredible. The bands have great shows. When they hit D.C., Minor Threat puts on a unique show. The club they are playing in takes the p.a. away for fear of the crowd. So the kids

back out at the world. Funny thing is, most of these movies have little or nothing to do with music, beyond their soundtracks. The thread of *Repo Man* not only hooked me on the music and ethics involved, but led to a way of seeing punk rock in movies as a part of culture that has always been here. Maybe it's called anarchy, sometimes it's called revolutionary, but punk rock as a philosophy rather than a fashion statement or strictly as a musical style is way older than any of us.

Repo executive producer, and one quarter of The Monkees, Michael Nesmith had a fairly interesting foot in punk films. As the producer of *Tapeheads* (1988), the barely noticed cult film that paired John Cusack and Tim Robbins as lead stars early in their careers. Ironically, the soon to be liberal spokes-actors play two guys who will do anything they can to be music video superstars. The scummy Cusack is the brains, the nerdy Robbins is the brawn tech-head. They fall in with the epic Don Cornelius of *Soul Train* fame and make videos on spec (for free) in order to get the big bucks later. Along the way, they try to make their childhood-fave soul band famous while dodging a

in attendance sing all the lyrics for them. And after all is said and done, Youth Brigade and Social D pulled off a big tour simply by working hard and working together.

Another way to approach punk rock is to look at its roots. It'd be a disservice to paste the punk tag to any and every movie that was subversive or weird, but there are definitely some recurring themes that punk rock picked up, rattled around, and spewed

politician (played by the great Clu Gulager from *Return of the Living Dead*) who is bent on wiping out the Ruskies.

The punk star hit parade shows up in *Tapeheads*. Fishbone appears as a country band, a Devo song is played by a fake Swedish band, and the Video Aces make the ultimate video for Stiv Bators and The Lords of the New Church. Appropriately enough, Jello Biafra finally shows up to stop the sleaze.

illustrations on this page by Jonathon Baker
culturaldissection@hotmail.com



HTR#25

HEADWOUND

Avail. 11/5/04

HEADWOUND

"Ginmill" CD
New Jersey kings of beer brand new album! Just when you thought they didn't make 'em like this anymore... 13 years on and their best stuff yet. A real swift kick in the rear, of which punk rock could use about a thousand. The holy trinity of NJ punk; WRETCHED ONES, NIBLICK HENBANE and HEADWOUND. Nuff' said.

HTR#8



Avail. 12/4/04

THE STAGGERS

"The Sights, The Sounds, The Fear and The Pain" CD
Finally! Their 1st album back in print w/ a new unreleased track, Joe Blow 10-fi bonus songs and 3 video's. (1 Stagers and 2 old Riot Squad) Fans of punk, oi, rock n roll, 'billy, country and even the odd spaghetti western music aficionado will love this one. Covers of Lloyd Price and MOTO that will knock both your socks and your pants off!!!

HAUNTED TOWN RECORDS

HTR#21

MIDWEST RULES

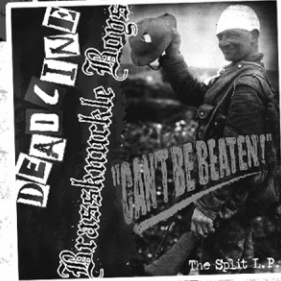
"You're Weak-We're Strong" Vol 2 CD
BRASSKNUCKLE BOYS, NINE POUND HAMMER, PHENOMS, BUMP N UGLIES, ROUSTABOUTS, SOUTHPAW MANNERS (split n broke), TANKA RAY, FORGOTTEN FOUR, MASHERS and more... 22 LOUD unreleased/rare tracks, 16 pg booklet.



HTR#23

THE STAGGERS

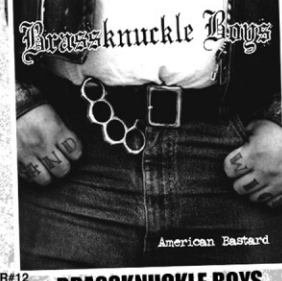
"One Heartbeat Away From Hell" CD
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HTR#24

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HTR#12

BRASSKNUCKLE BOYS

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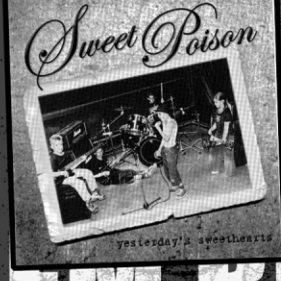
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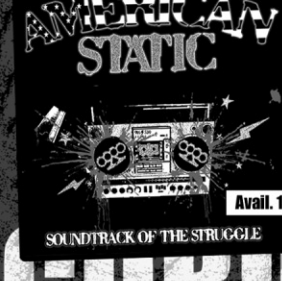
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Avail. 11/15/04



SAR010

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Mike Nesmith also took part in the Monkees' feature film *Head* (1968), directed by Bob Rafelson. By the time the band was making the film, they were already a washed up experiment, a band created for television and teenie boppers. How is this punk? In *Head*, the band systematically destroys their own image and what was to become MTV nonsense. The title song lets the audience know the band is just a media creation, with strings to be pulled. Now they want out. They jump through scenes and ideas fast. When they get tired of playing "themselves," they stop the dialogue.

Although the film is all-consumed with destroying their own fake fame, it is closely structured after one of the great early punk films, *Duck Soup* (1933). As writers and actors, The Marx Brothers destroyed society in every one of their films. Instead of showing the insanity of government and war by portraying serious revolutionaries, they put themselves at the top in a clever satire.

Right off the bat, Groucho Marx becomes president of a country going broke financially. Sound familiar? It gets better. He blatantly declares war on a neighbor for no reason at all—or barely—for the love of a rich woman. Along the way, the four brothers enact total destruction, piling insanity on top of insanity, singing the troops into a war fervor through repetition of gibberish—"But everyone else is into it. Aren't you?"

Chico, Harpo, and Zeppo Marx jockey for various cabinet positions in the surreal government. In the simple search for money they backstab each other and tear the country up. While hilarity ensues in the fake war film, there are so many similarities to today, by paying a little attention, it'll make you a little ill. The writing is sharp and delivered fast. Through total absurdity, The Marx Brothers somehow predicted the greed and militarism over the next seventy years.

Getting back to the original *Repo* thread, a collection of short films by Bill Brown is coming out soon on DVD, dealing with the same 1980s issues that Brown grew up with as a teenager in that decade. Brown, from Lubbock, Texas, makes personal documentaries that are too smart to be hipster and too modest to be academic pretensions. All his shorts are funny and insightful. Headed straight to the heart of

conspiracy, Brown traveled to *Roswell* (1994) to explore what really happened: an alien teenager on a joyride.

In the picturesque *Buffalo Common* (2001), Brown heads to North Dakota to investigate what happens when missile silos are finally decommissioned and blown up. Equally fascinating is the rash decision of residents there to pick up and move to über-suburban areas like Las Vegas, leaving the Dakotas a virtual frontier land.

In his road trip movie of the trans-Canada highways, *Confederation Park* (1999), Brown paints both the scenery and the feelings of bor-

tearing down the system from inside. Man, you're working an overnight shift in a packing warehouse.

As Russell bounces from job to job, he not only gives some insight on the human condition but also provides mounds of deadpan humor. Somehow, Russell and Smith bring a unique feel to the documenting of mundane work behavior. When one manager is disappointed in Randy, he makes him switch chairs so Randy can fire himself. Denizens of overnight shifts create their own perverse logic, and when one co-worker talks Randy into going to a strip club, you just know it's not gonna be pretty.

Lastly—the source of *Repo Man*'s nuclear trunk. In the very surreal film noir *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), the detective Mike Hammer is on the search for a golden box that glows and explodes when opened. The Mickey Spillane story is about nuclear destruction through the veil of secret treasure, as detective and femme fatale notions take on the feel of top secret agents using deception, weapons, and sex to get the goods. As Hammer, actor Ralph Meeker plays it straight, is tough as nails, yet is beat unconscious more often than he wins. He won't play by the rules or side with the cops, which may be a noble vigilante move, but he doesn't realize he is no longer in downtown, tackling love interests and rolling drunks. Now he is in the atomic age and the new suburban trappings. The end results are stunning and confusing. In a way he



(above) Flea in *Suburbia*
(page 44) Billy Zoom in *X: The Unheard Music*

der life vividly, somehow staying beautiful while being critical. It is not supposed to be a tense area, yet subversive activities are everywhere, from teenage punk rock to subway terrorists and abandoned bunkers.

"There's room to move as fry cook," one of the best lines in *Repo Man*, immediately leads to one of the best and most unknown films of the 1990s: *American Job* (1995). It was directed by Chris Smith, one of the co-directors behind the great documentaries *American Movie* (1999) and the recent *Yes Men* (2003). Not a documentary and not a mockumentary, *Job* follows co-writer and actor Randy Russell through a variety of dead-end jobs. Although Russell is an actor, everyone else in the film actually works at the particular business. Conceived from Russell's zine of the same name, it is a genuine look at what is really expected of America's citizens. You are not a star athlete, you are not rich and gorgeous, you are not worshipped by others, rather, you are a cog in an enormous wheel. It's not even about

survives, but at what cost?

So there you have it. Punk music, a germination of the seeds that have been falling between the cracks in American subculture's sidewalk for decades, sprouts up as a resilient weed. Some movies get made about it, which in turn inspires a whole new wave of punks. And if you look at the movies closely enough, some of the messages and ideas are as old as the Marx Brothers. Older, even.

How did it all happen?

I blame society.



WHERE YOU CAN GET THE DVDS:

American Job is available only through the director: <www.americanmovie.com>.

X: The Unheard Music is coming out on DVD Jan 25.

Duck Soup just came out on DVD.

All three *Declines* are getting fixed up for DVD.

The Next Best Place, a DVD collection of Bill Brown's shorts, is available through www.peripheralproduce.com

Alice Bag

INTERVIEW BY KAT JETSON
AND TODD TAYLOR

PHOTOS BY KAT AND TODD

INTRODUCTION BY TODD



Punk rock exploded in Los Angeles in the late '70s. Hundreds of bands seemed to root up from the cracks in the culture and spread quickly, like a fungus made of fireworks. I'm not at all interested in LA flexing its punk muscles against the rest of the world. I'm not one for strictly geographic rivalries. I'm just fascinated that so many super talented and divergent bands seemed to come from the shadow of a culture white washed and obsessed with bands like The Bee Gees (and disco in general) that punk bands, flying largely under the radar, flashed out in a nuclear bomb-like force. The crater's still there and it's still as real and as sticky as the La Brea Tar Pits. Its effects, if you listen close enough, are all around in current punk bands. Looking back, over the span of almost thirty years, it's easy to get it all wrong. To get too romantic. To forget the assholes, sycophants, pedophiles, and rip-off artists that played large roles in this powerful time. But one thing still keeps on delivering—if a band was fortunate to even record a 7". The music. Some of it is flat-out amazing. Still. Even if only two or three songs were recorded in a studio or live.

I wasn't around at the explosion—too young and living in a different state—but one of the bands that I'd lucked into at the vinyl roulette of my independent record store was The Bags. For three dollars, I got a single I listened to several hundred times before I accidentally left it on my car seat during the day and it warped in the heat although I'd covered it up. All I knew about the 7" was that I really liked the songs, that I thought it was the same band I'd seen on *The Decline of Western Civilization*, but I couldn't be sure because the name was slightly different and there hadn't been a sleeve with the single I'd bought. "Survive" backed with "Babylonian Gorgon." Put out in 1978. An achingly defiant woman's voice led the charge of tuneful destruction. The two short songs sounded so tattered yet so indestructible, like a battered Nova with a bulletproof engine that roared when they stepped on the gas. It's the type of single that I'd just flip over and over again, wanting to listen to that bastard as much as I could. Soak it in.

Fast forward to the 2000s. Having lived in Los Angeles for nearing a decade, there's always a low rumble of what's happening to LA punk rock's alumni: who died of what, who's planning a comeback with no other original members, who's doing their twenty-fifth "last



tour ever” while failing to write a new song in fifteen years. Not a whisper about Alice Bag, until East LA’s punk rock diplomat, Jimmy Alvarado, told us of a show happening at the side of the Asian Pacific Museum, celebrating the rich musical history of East LA, from klezmer to the zoots, from folk to punk. During one of the quieter sets was Alice Bag. She was playing with Teresa, who was the lead singer of another great punk band that fell through the cracks, The Brat. I’m a horrible stalker. Even though I would have really liked to talk to both women, I just left the show with a huge smile on my face. Hey, both of them were alive, looked great, and were still playing music.

As things like this have a way of turning out, about a year later, Alice emailed Razorcake, thanking us for covering a Dinah Cancer live show. We got to chatting. Not only is she playing in a punk band again—Stay at Home Bomb—she said she’d be up to an interview, that she wants to talk about the past, which, she admits, is a pretty recent turn of events.

The interview you’re about to read isn’t purely a history lesson or a walk down memory lane. I was pleasantly surprised how deep Alice’s fire still burns, how candidly she answered some tough questions—and not just solely as a female, Mexican punk rock singer from the late ‘70s—but as a human being who’s been through a lot and is still willing to give back when so many others have given up or given in.

Todd: At what age was it that you sang for a Spanish educational cartoon?

Alice: I was in elementary school. I think it was either fifth or sixth grade. Actually, I think I did it in both because I have two different pictures in the studio. They had to do with building self esteem, and they talked about the differences in kids and how you should accept differences in children and then they talked about relationships with people and how your friends could help you.

Todd: So it was kind of like a PBS type of thing.

Alice: Right.

Kat: Was it for a video?

Alice: They were cartoons and I did a voiceover.

Kat: Do you have them?

Alice: No. I’d love to see them. I actually remember little parts of songs.

Todd: Do you know what your character was for your voice?

Alice: I know that it was a tall, skinny, dark-haired girl. [laughs] I remember one part where she’s singing, “Some people are tall...” and somebody else sings, “And some are short.” I don’t know her name and I don’t know where those cartoons are.

Todd: You were the daughter of Mexican immigrants, is that right?

Alice: Yes.

Todd: What did your parents do?

Alice: My father was a carpenter and he was an independent contractor, which just means that he would put up signs all over the place and people would call him. He would work a lot sometimes and we would have money, and other times we would be really poor. My mother didn’t work at first, but once I was settled in school, she got a job as a teacher’s aide.

Todd: They moved from Mexico City, is that correct?

Alice: No, my mother actually grew up here. She was born in Mexico and her family moved here. She grew up during the Depression, so they would live in one place for a month and then move some place else. They’re from Chihuahua and Coahuila, which are northern states in Mexico.

Todd: When did you first begin speaking English?

Alice: I learned to speak English in school. I probably learned a few words in kindergarten, first grade, second grade...



MY GIRLFRIEND FOR A FEW DAYS IN THE EARLY PUNK DAYS WAS BELINDA CARLISLE.

Todd: Was it prohibited to speak English in your house?

Alice: Yes, in my house we were only allowed to speak Spanish. My father figured I would learn English in school, and I did, but it was a very painful process. I remember crying and being very frustrated because I couldn’t answer. I felt like you could see it on the teacher’s face, like, “This kid is dumb.”

Kat: Like they hate having you there, like you are such an annoyance.

Todd: This is kind of a difficult question to ask. You mentioned in a Las Tres interview concerning a lyric: “I didn’t kill my husband, but domestic violence is something that I grew up around.” Was that referring to your father?

Alice: Yes.

Todd: Do you think that the abuse that you saw your father give your mother was one of the release points for The Bags? Like you finally got a microphone and could sing in front of an audience?

Alice: Absolutely. I think, as a child, you can’t really express the intense feelings of fear, anger, and helplessness that you go through when you witness something like that. You kind of stuff it all in. You’re helpless. And often I didn’t just witness the violence. A lot of times I was just thrown into the middle of it. I had to try and break it up. At one point, I remember my father had beaten up my mother and he had her kneeling in front of him, and he spit at her. I was crying on the side, telling him to stop, and he said, “No, I want you to come over here and spit on her,” and I refused to do it. You can’t do anything at that point but cry and hold the rage in. I think that The Bags was just a perfect vehicle for me to let out all that anger and frustration. I think I would have expressed myself violently towards my father if I had been nineteen or twenty when the abuse was going on.

Todd: What was The Bags’ gimmick at the very beginning?

Alice: I don’t know why we decided to do that. Patricia [Bags co-founder and bassist] had gone off with some friends of hers and put bags on their heads because they were bored one night. That’s how it always happens, right? [laughs] I guess they got such a mixed reaction. People really freaked out. They didn’t think it was just a group of teenagers with bags over their heads. Some of them were really scared and some people thought they were crazy. It was supposed to be a joke.

Kat: Are you glad it’s a joke that didn’t last? Because you’d have to be constantly wearing that bag over your head.

Alice: Yeah. [laughs]

Kat: Aren't you glad that Darby [Crash, lead singer of the Germs] pulled your bags off? You'd have to go through life wearing that, and then you'd have to put out an album called *Unmasked*, like *Kiss* or something. Did you have eyes cut out?

Alice: Oh, we took time decorating them. Each bag had its own personality. That was the fun part, decorating the bag.

Kat: That actually sounds kinda cool, like Halloween.

Todd: Have you ever thought about doing something like a lucha mask, where you have something that looks like a paper bag but it's made out of a breathable material?

Alice: There's a band that does that, isn't there?

Kat: There's a couple.

Alice: I think that's great, because then you don't have to worry about putting on your makeup. On the other hand, I think a lot of what I do onstage and how I communicate has to do with my facial expressions. As a teacher, I was teaching a lesson one day and I was getting excited, because that's how I get my students excited. One of the children raised his hand and said, "Miss Velasquez, why does your face go all over the place?"

Todd: Do you remember any of the lyrics from the really early songs? At the very beginning, when you first started, you had a lot of bag-themed songs. I believe those got taken out of the set pretty quickly.

to start an all-girl band. One day, we were at the Starwood and Rodney Bingenheimer was there, and the girls said, "Go talk to Rodney and tell him that we have an all-girl band." I think it was within a week or two that I got a call from Kim Fowley, and he said, "We're putting together a new group called Venus and the Razorblades. Would you like to audition?" All of us went there and auditioned, and we didn't make it, but we met some other musicians. One of them was another girl who was going to play drums for us. I can't remember what her name was, but we started practicing with her. Once we actually had rehearsals and stopping just talking about being a band, we decided we were going to be called Masque Era. At first, we just thought mascara, like the eyelash makeup, and then we said, "No, let's talk about people with hidden identities or people hiding who they really are." And it was going to be spelled like the Masque, but there was no Masque at that point. [The Masque was one of the flash point clubs of early LA punk rock.] What was so weird was that at the drummer's house, I met Nicky Beat, who was Jeffrey Ivisovich at that time. He was excited because he was going to start playing with this new band called the Weirdos, but they asked him to cut his hair and he wouldn't. I kinda started dating him and we went to the show, and that's when the whole paper bag thing started.

Kat: It seemed like everyone had a name. Were you bummed that you were Alice Bag? Did you ever wish that you could have had your own name?

TODD: WHAT WAS THE WORST BAG DECORATION THAT SOMEONE CAME UP WITH?
ALICE: IT'S GOT TO BE GEZA X'S BLOODY TAMPONS. THEY WERE HANGING OFF THE SIDE OF HIS BAG LIKE CHRISTMAS TREE ORNAMENTS.

Alice: They did, because we had Craig Lee, who would come into practice with three or four songs as opposed to just one, so we slowly moved the old songs out. I think Patricia and I felt like we weren't the best songwriters. Neither of us felt like we were competent lyricists. I had, and I think I always will have, second language learner limitations, where I'll say something and my husband will tell me, "It's not a direct translation, it doesn't mean the same thing in English." In "Survive," there's a line about commodities, and I was talking to my husband about it and I said, "Having all the commodities of home?" In Spanish, "comodidades" is "comodidad," which means comforts.

Todd: Like amenities.

Alice: Right, and I was like, "Commodities are like creature comforts, right?" And he said, "No, that's not the way you say it," and I started thinking, "How many songs have I written that have these mixed meanings that just don't translate?"

Todd: Do you remember any of the titles of the gimmicky songs?

Alice: No, I just remember "Bag Bondage," that's all. There's a tape that Greg from Artifix Records found somewhere that has "Bag Bondage."

Kat: Do you have people giving you things that you didn't even know existed? That's got to be so trippy to hear a tape that you don't even remember.

Alice: Occasionally. It seems to be happening more and more lately. I think I've just kind of moved away from all this for a long time, and when I started trying to do music again, I realized that some people hadn't forgotten who Alice Bag was. Then I started getting emails, letters, pictures... it's neat.

Todd: Is it true that the Unknown Comic got inspiration from you guys?

Alice: That is what Patricia said. She said that she had seen an interview where he said he saw a band with bags over their heads and that's where he got the idea from.

Todd: Have you ever seen any other band with bags over their heads?

Alice: No.

Kat: It would be hard now because they're all plastic.

Todd: Is it true that one of the names that you were kicking around for The Bags was Masque Era?

Alice: Yes. Patricia, another friend of ours named Margot, and I wanted

Alice: A cooler name?

Kat: No, no, not that it's not cool, but...

Alice: Actually, before I was going to be Alice Bag, I was going to be Adrena Lynn.

Kat: My friend's writing name is Anna Mosity. I thought that was pretty good.

Todd: What was the worst bag decoration that someone came up with?

Alice: It's got to be Geza X's bloody tampons. They were hanging off the side of his bag like Christmas tree ornaments.

Todd: You said that your mother made scrapbooks of The Bags and the Weirdos. How extensive did she make the scrapbooks?

Alice: My mom was a teacher's aide, so she had all this construction paper and she was already thinking along those lines, so a lot of it is like something a kid would do. When my mother died, they were all in a box in the garage somewhere, and when I took them out, the pages were falling apart and yellowed and torn, but some of the stuff we tried to salvage. That's one of the reasons we wanted to do the website was to not lose all that stuff.

Kat: Did she go and seek that stuff out, like go get a *Flipside* or something, or would you be like, "Here, mom?"

Alice: I would throw everything out. I would read a magazine and throw it away, and my mother, unbeknownst to me, dug it out of the trash. When I was taking photography classes, I would throw all of the old pictures away and she would dig them out of the trash.

Kat: And flyers, who would have thought to keep flyers? There was an exhibit a few years ago that was just flyers. Were you ever apart of that, like did you make your own flyers?

Alice: Yeah, I have some at home, too.

Todd: What was the first non-LA, non-New York, non-London punk rock band that inspired you? Because people think of those cities as the early punk triumvirate, but it's not quite true.

Alice: Like in the early days? That's hard, because if I had heard somebody from somewhere else, that would mean that they had a record out, right?

Todd: Or a tape or something. The thing that spurred that question specifically is that I was looking at your website and there are pictures in the

Canterbury of the Feederz, who were from Phoenix.

Alice: Yeah, there was a whole scene of people who came over from Phoenix and started doing stuff. They were insane, those guys, weren't they?

Kat: They still are. [laughs]

Alice: I remember hanging out with Frank Discussion and he was just really level headed.

Todd: You know he lives in this area?

Alice: Really?

Todd: He just moved back a few months ago.

Kat: Did you travel outside of LA to play shows?

Alice: We played in San Francisco and San Diego. I'm not sure if we played in Santa Cruz, I think that was one of my other bands. We played Portland, Seattle.

Kat: What was that like? Were people aware of an LA scene, like were they responsive?

Alice: Yeah, they were great. It was a small community and they were very supportive. It was really great being able to go into a town where you didn't know anybody and be able to sleep at someone's house.

Kat: You don't hear about that so much. You always hear about bands from that era just sort of staying in the area.

Alice: They'd heard of us. They were very receptive and they were friendlier than the LA crowd, because it was really exciting for them.

Todd: Is that where Sid Vicious saw you guys, when you played in San Francisco?

Alice: Yeah, I think he ended up there because he was hanging out with Helen Killer. She must've taken him. I understand that he passed out in our dressing room, and if I'm not mistaken, he might've been kicked out of the Sex Pistols after that show because I think there was a lot of turmoil going on that night.

Todd: Did he show appreciation at your set?

Alice: Oh, yeah, he came up on stage, he put his arm around me. I wish I had more pictures. He rolled around on stage like a puppy.

Todd: How sexually charged was this time? I mean, this is literally a world away from what it is now. AIDS isn't even on the horizon yet. A writer at *Slash* noted that you were "a dark, raunchy, romantic girl doing loud, queer things with her voice." Later on, you were on a stage in a t-shirt that read "Sexual Outlaw."

Alice: I don't know. I was a teenager. When you're a teenager, you're full of sexual energy that needs to be released. These are days before AIDS, when birth control was easily available, and when you're a girl in a band... I think I had a lot of sexual energy. I don't think I was deliberately trying to be sexual on stage. I don't think I was conscious of a lot of the stuff that was going on onstage. I think there was a lot of stuff that was just happening because it was pent-up energy, and if it happened to be sexual, that's just part of who I was at seventeen, eighteen, nineteen.

Kat: At the end of the shows, would you be like, "Oh, we're done? Are we finished?"

Alice: That's the thing about those performanc-



es—I was so much in the moment that lots of times, people would say to me, "Do you remember when you did this?" or "I loved it when you did that." And I would say, "I said that? I don't remember that." It's kind of weird. In your daily life, you're so aware of the order of things, what you're doing, what you're going to do next, what you just finished doing. When you're on stage, it's like time stops.

Todd: Going from sex to violence, was there any time when you had to really worry about your own safety, either during a show or right after a show that somebody didn't take very kindly to?

Alice: I don't think I ever thought that. I think when I was on stage, I felt invincible, and then when I came off stage, I felt that way, too. I remember being in New York City for the first time and being lost, because my friend had gone home with someone. I was walking down a dark street and there was a man walking behind me, and I remember thinking, "You better be scared, because I could kill you right now." I felt like there was nothing that could happen to me, that nothing could touch me.

Kat: That's quite a feeling.

Alice: It is. That's an amazing feeling. I remember one time being in the audience at a Dils show and a guy reached around and grabbed my crotch. I grabbed his hand and jumped up, because I was pogoing, and I slammed into his face with my whole body. I didn't stop long enough to look at him and to realize that he was wearing glasses, so the glasses broke and cut his eye open. There was blood everywhere and he had to go to the hospital and have stitches, as it turned out. I remember Claude Bessy [editor of *Slash*, singer of Catholic Discipline] pulling me aside and saying, "This guy is in a gang and his buddies are after you. You better go in and explain what happened." I went in and said, "Look, your friend here grabbed me, and I'm sorry that he ended up the way he did, but he deserved it," and they were okay with that. A week or two later, we were playing at the Hong Kong Café and this very tall woman came in, and I had this very funny feeling that she was looking at me. As I was leaving, she blocked the doorway, and I was thinking, "Uh, oh." I wasn't in that excited Alice Bag mode. She said, "You sent my boyfriend to the hospital." I knew exactly what she was talking about and I said, "If you want to get into a fight over your boyfriend, that's fine, we'll go outside and do that. But I wonder why you would want to have a boyfriend who goes to clubs and grabs women's crotches." She said, "He didn't do that." So I talked to her, and by the end of the night, she was ready to kill him. He was sitting on the side looking back at us, and he couldn't believe that she was sitting with me.

Kat: Just because I'm curious, and maybe because I'm gay myself, was it accepted? Did it have to be kind of hidden, or was it not cool?

Alice: I think it probably was accepted for girls, because it's always accepted for girls [laughs]. I

don't remember ever having any strange feelings about kissing girls, and just to add a little interest to your story, my girlfriend for a few days in the early punk days was Belinda Carlisle.

Kat: So it was alright then?

Alice: I think there were several guys who felt that it wasn't. With the Screemers, Tomata was always out. I don't think there was any question that he was gay, but nobody ever made a big deal out of it. However, there were people who, even today, are hiding that they're gay because they think it's going to diminish their popularity. I won't say who they are. I know that Craig Lee kind of wanted to see if you could change. He tried to go out with girls and it didn't work out for him. You've got to understand that we were seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, so we weren't sure. Some of us were like, "Let's try this out and see if it works for us."

Kat: It seems like such an aggressive time that it wouldn't be conducive. Like, "Oh, you can't be gay. This is aggressive music and we're angry." I was just curious about that.

Todd: I have a geeky question. The song "Import Song," you said it was recorded in an unknown studio and was written by somebody outside of the band.

Alice: That's more of a Nervous Gender song than a Bags song. That was Mikey Ochoa and Gerardo Velasquez and it was at one of their homes in the bedroom. We were sitting around and they had all this electronic equipment, and we just started goofing around, making up songs, and it ended up on that record. The lyrics were written by Gerardo, I think. The music was kind of a jam session, like "Try this!"

THE GOAL WOULD BE TO GET PEOPLE TO THINK, TO QUESTION, AND TO LEARN TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES

Kat: Do you see any money from all the comps that have survived, or is it so far removed?

Todd: Like the *Yes*, *LA* comp.

Alice: No, I've never seen any money from that. The only money I've ever received was from the movie *The Decline of Western Civilization*, and that's because we signed the proper contracts.

Kat: Who gets the money from all those comps?

Alice: I imagine the people who released them.

Kat: It's got to be weird to hear your songs in all these places.

Alice: Yeah, and I've never thought it was worth my while to hire a lawyer and give him or her a bunch of money just to secure the rights and to go back and collect money for that. I have a feeling that it would be... I don't think I would profit from it. To tell you the truth, I've profited in other ways by having the songs out, because people know me and it allows me an opportunity to do other things. The sad thing is that I'll play with another band and I'll have somebody yell "Survive" or "Gluttony," but the good thing is that they might give this other project the benefit of the doubt because they've heard "Survive."

Todd: What's amazing is how few Bags Dangerhouse singles were made. There are differing accounts, but only between twelve hundred and fifteen hundred were pressed. Artifix is going to re-release it, isn't he?

Alice: Yes. He's going to try and gather enough material for an album. It's funny that we're talking about this, because earlier today, we were on the internet and we noticed that there was somebody in Thailand auctioning off some of Craig Lee's personal things. We knew that his long-time partner lives in Thailand, so we're wondering if he has any recordings, and now we actually have a way that we might be able to get ahold of him. It's very exciting.

Todd: I know bits and pieces of this story but I've never been able to put the whole story together. There's a show at the Troubadour and it ends up being the last punk rock show at the Troubadour for a couple of years. I don't know if it's all on the same night, but a bunch of furniture got piled up in the corner...

Alice: Yeah.

Todd: Was that the same night that Nicky Beat got into a fight with Tom Waits?

RAZORCAKE 52

Alice: Yes. That's all on the same night.

Kat: That sounds like a great night.

Alice: The story actually starts back at Canter's. My version of the story is that we were leaving Canter's and a friend of mine who was with us knew Tom Waits and said, "Oh, let me say something to my friend." The rest of us were on the way out. I don't know if it's still there, but there used to be a whole pastry section, so we were all looking at the pastries and then she came back over and said, "Let me introduce you to my friend." So we went over and met Tom Waits and his entourage. I probably said, "Oh, we're playing at the Troubadour, please come see our show," because it was the following weekend or something, right around the corner. Somehow, that was interpreted as flirting. Who knows, maybe I smiled or winked or something. Later on, my friend came back to us and she said, "Tom Waits really liked you. He thinks you were great and he thinks Nicky's a dipshit," or something to that effect. Nicky was just like, "What?" Angry and whatever. We had left the place and I didn't think anything of it. Nobody did. The night of the Troubadour, we're upstairs and we're getting ready and Nicky had to play drums with us because we didn't have a drummer at that point. We used to go through drummers...

Todd: Like Spinal Tap, where you can't keep track of your drummers. I think everybody except Terry Graham...

Alice: Yeah, Terry Graham lasted the longest. So we're there and somebody came in and said, "Tom Waits is here and he's at one of the front tables." During that time, it was customary for clubs to have these long rows of tables in the front and people would watch the band while they

ate. He was there with a group of people and Nicky was just livid. As we stepped on stage, Nicky went up to a microphone and he said something like, "We have a celebrity in the audience and his name is Tom Waits..." I don't remember his exact words, but I know that it ended with "pussy." [laughs] So we did our set, and as we were playing, our friends and our fans, the punks, started to move the tables and chairs out of the way so they could dance. Pretty soon, there was a pile. There were a lot of tables and chairs and they were just thrown in the back and everyone had come up to dance except for one table and that was Tom Waits' table.

He was sitting there expressionless, and at one point I looked over and saw a chair flying over their table, but still they sat there, seething. At the end of the night when we were going to load up our gear, the bouncers had locked us in and told us we couldn't take out our equipment, not until that was settled. I was like, "This is stupid." I was freaking out. You were talking about being scared. I think at that moment I was scared, because all our friends were outside. It was just us and a lot of these burly guys. Luckily, and I didn't know this at the time, their only intention was to make sure that nobody interfered in the fight. They made a big, burly circle around them and they had it out. I remember trying to open the door and thinking, "They're going to wreck our equipment and beat us all up," but none of that happened. It was just Nicky and Tom having it out, rolling around on the ground.

Todd: That sounds very gentlemanly, actually.

Alice: It turned out to be okay. I don't remember how it stopped. At some point, they got pulled apart.

Kat: But they needed to get their aggression out.

Alice: That's that. We were released after that.

Kat: I like that story a lot because I don't like Tom Waits. [laughs]

Alice: I didn't know who he was and I didn't know that he was a celebrity. If you see Tom Waits and you don't know who he is and you don't know he's a celebrity, are you gonna flirt with that guy? [laughs] I personally wouldn't.

Todd: I know the answer to some of these things, but just for record, there was a tumultuous end to The Bags. Want to take it from the beginning of the end?

Alice: I'm not sure if I should say that we kicked out our bass player,

Patricia, or that she quit, because the way it went down is that we were at my mother's house. Terry, Rob, Craig and I were discussing kicking her out. We'd had a couple of really bad shows where Patricia was just kind of not cutting it. There had been times when all of us, at one point or another, were not cutting it, and we probably said, "Ahh, we should kick *that* person out." We were just having the conversation, bitching about her, basically, but we hadn't done anything.

She called up and said, "I know you're all there talking about me. I quit." At that point, we said, "Well, she quit, she did the work for us. We don't even have to talk about this." I would like to say this because I think Patricia, to this day, thinks that I kicked her out and that the other guys went along because I was the leader of the group, which she would like people to believe. I was not the leader of the group, first of all. If there was to be a leader, it would have been Craig. He really held it together. He booked the shows, he organized our transportation, he told us where we were staying. He was the oldest and most experienced and by far the most responsible, so if there was ever a leader, it would have been Craig. To say that I was the leader and I kicked her out is not true. Terry and Rob went on to play in other bands with her, in the Gun Club, which is strange because Rob was the most vocal proponent of getting her out of the band. Rob is dead now and cannot speak for himself, but Terry knows this to be true and has never admitted this to Pat, nor has he admitted his own role in her ousting. It must be confusing for her, not having all the pieces to the puzzle. I think at some point, she must have felt like, "Well, they still like me. It was just Alice."

Anyway, it was a messy, messy thing. I think she must have felt very angry, because it was her idea for us to wear bags over our heads and she had thought of the name. She told us that she was going to register or copyright the name, and she called Slash and told them that they couldn't use the name The Bags, so it had to be changed for the movie. During that time, we were still playing as The Bags, but we were thinking about other names that we could use. One of the names was Plan 9, because Craig's mother had been in the

movie *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. There was a number of other things that we could have used, and Slash just came up to us and said, "You know what? We're just going to put 'The Alice Bag Band.'" I think they figured that there would be at least some recognition, because the word "bag" would still be in the name. What's funny about that movie is that during Catholic Discipline, Rick, who was married Patricia for awhile, had borrowed her bass and on the bass, it says "The Bags."

Todd: *Decline* is such a powerful movie, and one obvious reason is the night that they tried to film five bands. The Circle Jerks and Fear (who made it into *Decline*) in no way, shape, or form are going to be forgotten in history, but the Urinals and the Gears (who didn't make it into the movie)... they're obscure. They're great bands and on the same level. It's just amazing that that movie is such a watershed for that.

Alice: I'm glad you mentioned that there were five bands because I remember that night. Nobody wanted to go on fifth. [laughs] Of course, in my sage memory, I was the peacemaker and I said, "Why don't we draw straws?" And guess who ended up going fifth. [laughs] Boy, did I regret that.

Todd: A lot of people's theory about the decline of the first couple of waves of punk rock was mostly the move to hardcore and the shows becoming more violent. I think that's part of it and that it did happen in

specific cases and for certain bands. However I have this theory: I think what was happening with The Bags was happening with a lot of other bands. There were very few labels that bands could put releases on and DIY wasn't yet part of the widespread consciousness. It's not like now, where I can say, "I want to go to my friend's four track, we can record it, we can burn a CD, we get it pressed, we'll make a thousand CDs." Do you think that a lot of punk rock bands' effort to become more professional, more clean, took away some of the energy? Like instead of saying, "We're going to control this. We can do this," they gave it to someone else?

Alice: I think that definitely happened. I know that happened for us, because I know that we had shows where Patricia would come up to me and say, "There's an A&R guy in the audience. You've got to watch your pitch," because I would get excited and I would start singing in who knows what key. When there's loud music behind you, it's hard to tell. I would sing really badly sometimes and the A&R person would think,

"Why do they let that person up there?" That happened, where people would come and we wouldn't get a recording contract. I'd end up under a lot of pressure from my band to cool it so that I wouldn't be out of breath and I could hear what I was doing and I could listen to my pitch so that we could get a record contract.

I now realize that that's not what Alice Bag was all about and that's not what people were there for. They weren't there to see me sing a song beautifully. They were there for the kind of energy that I was putting out on stage and that, somehow, was touching them and connecting with some feeling that they had. If I had it all to do over again, I wouldn't have changed what I was doing. Unfortunately, I did try to change, and I'm glad that people don't have to do that now. They can just release something without it having to be major studio quality slick and it can capture something that's more honest and more true and more interesting.

Todd: I even think about it way before punk rock, like Alan Lomax going out into a field and recording people singing songs, literally in the field, and those are so impassioned. The consideration of audi-

ence is there, but the consideration of "this is how you keep yourself from going crazy, how you put things in perspective." If the first couple of waves of punk rock were so fragile, maybe they needed to learn something, because there are other bands that came along that I think are wildly popular, positive, and structured, like Minor Threat or Black Flag, that realized, "We're never going to release anything outside of this. Screw it. We're going to figure out how to do this one way or another and we're going to continue to do it."

Alice: Definitely. It evolved. I'm not one of those people who sits around going, "Oh, we were the best. It's too bad we were never signed because we would show these kids..." It evolved, and the bands after us, the hardcore group, took it to the next place that it had to go, which was taking control of the means of production.

Kat: After The Bags broke up, you had said that you weren't really interested and you were going to go to school, is that right? But were you still going to shows? Was there music happening that you were still really interested in?

Alice: I was still dragged into doing things like Castration Squad. One of the things that was happening at the time was that I had a lot of friends who were into drugs and having overdoses and dying. Even though I never felt like I was in any danger of becoming one of them, I wanted to



stay away because it was an ugly time. I did go to school, and while I was doing that, people would call me and say, "Do you want to do this? Do you want to come over and just play?" I ended up playing with Castration Squad for most of their shows, so I was still doing music in one way or another.

Todd: Didn't you first go to school to be a lawyer?

Alice: I wanted to be a lawyer, but then I realized that I really liked kids. I really liked analyzing arguments. I majored in philosophy, so I liked to deconstruct stuff like that. I must have been making up for all those years of not understanding what people were saying, but I thought that would be a good skill for being a lawyer. I think I was just a natural teacher. I've always enjoyed being around kids. I feel like I've done a lot more working with kids than I would have done as a lawyer. I've shaped a lot of little minds [laughs]. I used to wear a little button that said "Question Authority" and I encouraged the kids to always ask and always challenge what they're being taught. That's the most important thing that I teach them.

Kat: How old are the kids that you're teaching?

Alice: Right now, I'm working with fifth grade, which means ten and eleven year olds but I've taught all elementary grades.

Kat: Do they know about what you did?

Alice: No, they don't. Sometimes I'll take my acoustic guitar in and sing something with them or teach them a song.

Todd: It seems like when hardcore came out, a lot of the people from the original first couple of waves just gave up and said, "It's out of our hands, we can't do anything with it." That's not entirely true, because in the Cambridge Apostles, two of the guys in the first hardcore band in America were in that band, the Atta brothers from the Middle Class. I think a lot of people could adapt to different things. Can you tell people about the Cambridge Apostles, what kind of music they were.

Alice: They definitely had a soul influence, and Mike Atta could really play that kind of guitar. I don't know if it was a blend of things, I think it was pretty straightforward. I don't know what to call it.

Todd: I'll be honest, I've never heard them.

Alice: There were three girls who all sang, there were harmonies, there was more of a dance beat, and it was more old-time soul influenced. A band that we played with a few times that was kind of doing something similar would be Fishbone, except that we had chick harmonies.

Todd: Did your parents die suddenly? Before you had your first child, they were both dead?

Alice: My father was dead before I had my first child. My mother was still alive. They were pretty old, so they were about due [laughs]. My father died of renal failure in a hospital. He had diabetes and he was on a kidney machine for years and years, so we kind of expected that. My mother died suddenly of a heart attack.

Todd: The reason I asked is because I want to get people to understand that you're having a child, your parents are no longer there, you don't have the support system, and as you said before, you love children, so there has to be a metamorphosis here. You now have different priorities and different intentions. If I had a child, he or she would become a hugely important thing in my life and I would have to reorganize things.

Alice: Yeah, they become your first priority, even over meeting your own needs. You feel like, "This person is dependent on me. Their needs come first." What was happening for us is that my husband was working very long hours because I was at home for a while. I took some time off work so that I could be with my daughter and he had to work extra so he could pay all the bills. I thought, "I'm going to be a great mom. I've been teaching kids, I know what kids need, I love children," and I wasn't. I wasn't a great mom. My daughter was colicky, she was premature, she had to be, literally, in the lightbox, she had jaundice, and there were days when she would cry every night, every two or three hours. I know it doesn't sound like much...

Todd: It does. [laughs]

Alice: And you don't know what to do. You've tried feeding her, you've tried changing her, you've tried rocking her, you couldn't figure out what

to do, and this would happen every night. I was at home alone all day and getting up in the middle of the night, and my husband was working all the time, so I was going absolutely crazy. I remember one day, I hope my daughter doesn't hate me when she reads this one day, I was thinking, "I could end this right now. I could put a pillow over her face and it would all stop." It's a horrible thing to say because I love my daughter and I loved her then, but I was going crazy. I didn't know what to do. I had really hardcore postpartum blues and they lasted for a while. I would call my husband at work and say, "I don't think I can deal with it. Your daughter's crying." He would walk me through it, "Put her in the crib, get a glass of wine, go outside into the back yard and just sit there until I get home." That was the hardest time I ever lived through...

Todd: Dealing with people who have been involved in music for a long time, it's just not, "We're gonna go record in the studio, then we're going on tour," and "Why does your music sound different than before?" If people should understand that first of all, it's human beings making music and there are really huge external influences on the music. That's leading up to how did you come into contact with Teresa, who was in another fantastic East LA band called The Brat. What type of music did you guys make?

Alice: I met Teresa before I had a baby. I met her through a mutual friend, Bibbe Hansen and Sean Carrillo, her husband. They had a café downtown called Troy Café, where there were a lot of Latino acts playing. I was living with them at the time and I started helping out at the café, making coffee and waiting tables, and then I would go do all my school stuff and I would have nothing to do so I'd go to the café and hang out there. They knew Teresa because they were involved in the early East LA scene that was centered around the Vex.

They introduced us and we talked about doing stuff together and writing songs. At the time, I knew maybe three chords on the guitar and she knew probably ten. We decided to start writing songs and somehow Angela Vogel came into the equation. I think she just happened to be at Troy. It just kind of worked, because we all sing. One of us would start a song and one of us would do a harmony and the other one would do a harmony over that. It was all really vocal-centered at first because we could barely play. Las Tres played for a few years and it was really kind of taking off. It was doing very well. Angela had some personal things to deal with and she just stopped showing up to rehearsals and stopped showing up to shows, so Teresa decided to do a spinoff, Goddess 13. We just picked up some backup musicians and started recording. When we were recording, I got pregnant, and that was it. I really thought, "I can keep playing," and I really tried to but it just didn't work.

Todd: Was Teresa a teacher's aide?

Alice: She was my aide. When she was playing with me, I was doing a preschool program, and we were able to choose our own assistants, which was different from any other grade where you get whoever they assign you. She decided to come and work for me. It was fun. Every now and then, she would call me boss onstage.

Kat: What were your goals when you first started playing music and how are they different now?

Alice: Ever since I can remember, I wanted to be a singer. I remember in elementary school, I was very overweight, I had buck teeth, and I was a very unpopular kid. The only thing that saved me was my elementary school music teacher, who made me feel like I was worth something. She would call me up and say, "Okay, we're going to have a round and Alice, you're going to lead this side of the class and I'm going to lead this side of the class." I was always the music teacher's pet. At first, I just wanted to be a singer. It was just enjoyment. I just thought that would be a great job. Then I started thinking, "Wait a minute, maybe I could influence people and get them to think what I think and believe the things that I believe, because I think the things that I believe are right." Then I started thinking that it wasn't such a good idea to get people to believe what I believed just because I was a singer. The goal would be to get people to think, to question, and to learn to think for themselves, and if you could do that, then people could come to a conclusion that they could be held responsi-

ble for and commit to that.

Todd: To dovetail that, there's another part on your website where you basically say you took all your music ambition, placed it in a shoebox, put it away, and you thought, "For me to be a mother, I have to spend all my time and energy on being a mother. I can't do both." What happened on the day that you pulled the shoebox out, opened it up and said, "I can do both. I'm at the point in my life where I think music is still in my life and I want to reincorporate it." What was the catalyst for that?

Alice: I think part of it had to do with my daughter being in school and my having a little bit of time. That had a lot to do with it. Beyond that, even when that happened, I had very limited goals for myself, like I'm just going to play for pleasure when I started playing my guitar again. I'd put it away and it would collect dust and every now and then I'd pull it out again. After a while, when this was happening, I started thinking, "I hope I can make it to my daughter's fourth birthday. I hope I can make it to my daughter's fifth birthday. I wonder if I'll be alive for her sixth birthday." I really felt like I was starting to think in terms of, "I really should be dying soon." I felt very old, I felt like I wasn't useful, and I honestly felt like something inside of me told me, "Well, it's about time for you to die now." I had a hysterectomy and I felt much better, much different. I didn't feel like I was going to die after all. I was recovering from my hysterectomy when I got a call from a promoter saying, "We'd really like Las Tres to play a show three months from now." I said, "You know, I haven't talked to those girls in years." They said, "Well, why don't you try? We could pay you five hundred dollars for three songs." "Five hundred dollars for three songs? Okay, I'll call!"

Todd: Was that at the Asian Pacific museum?

Alice: Yeah.

Todd: I saw that show. That whole show was great.

Alice: I was literally in bed recovering and I called up the girls and they said, "Yeah, yeah, let's do it. We'll come over to your house. We'll bring our guitars." We started practicing and we did that show and then I thought, "This is great. I love singing with these girls but I really would like to do something where I play my electric guitar. I want to rock." At that time, I still had that pent up aggression from the years that I'd spent thinking of smothering my child and stepping outside with a glass of wine and feeling like I was trapped because I was a mother. We were thinking of names for Las Tres, like, "Let's change the name and get a whole band together so it won't just be the three of us." We wrote up a bunch of names. One that I came up with was Stay at Home Bomb. It didn't fly with Las Tres, but I thought, "Well someday I'm going to have a band called Stay at Home Bomb." It's funny the way these things happen because I went to a show at the Smell to see Lysa Flores because I hadn't seen her in a long time. She said, "El Vez is looking for some girls to play acoustic guitar for this show. He's doing this quinceañera. Would you like to do it?" I did it, Teresa did it, and Lysa did it. Lysa said, "This has been really fun. We should do something together," and I said, "Yeah, we should. We should do Stay at Home Bomb. It'll be like a punk band." The girls were into it and we asked Abby Travis to play bass and she got Judy from Betty Blowtorch and we had a couple of rehearsals. Then Lysa had to go on tour and Teresa had misgivings about the whole thing. She was trying to jumpstart The Brat again. They had had some offers to do some shows, so she was like, "I'm going to try and see this through with The Brat." She stepped away from it, and through a whole series of changes, we ended up with a whole different lineup in Stay at Home Bomb.



I AM STILL ALICE BAG, SHE'S UNDERNEATH ALL THESE LAYERS, ALL THESE OTHER NAMES AND ALL THESE OTHER THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED TO ME.

Todd: What is the crux of Stay at Home Bomb? If people go see you, what will they see?

Alice: It's kinda changing, but it started off as really schtick. I imagined us all wearing aprons and all being different kinds of moms, like a different character, and mine was going to be the crazy one. Lysa is the young, sweet mom who bakes cookies, the one you wish you had. Judy was going to be the soccer mom because she's into sports and she likes to run the show. Sharon, who was our bass player at that time and currently—she was pregnant—so she was just going to be the new mom. We would hang a clothesline behind us with baby clothes and we'd have a few appliances on the stage. During one of the songs, Lisa does a solo on the blender. She's trying to play slide on the mixer. [laughs] I play a baby bottle shaker. It's schtick but it's punk rock. The songs are punk in spirit.

Todd: Wrapping up, you say, "Take control of your own history or someone else writes your epitaph." What do you mean by that?

Alice: I think that, for a long time, I thought if I just go to school and run my own private life, Alice Bag will just die and be forgotten.

Todd: Or you're in the hands of somebody else.

Alice: Right, but that's what happened. I wanted to just let Alice Bag die, but instead of dying, other people started putting out records, writing stuff about me, saying things, and then I realized that they were going to do that anyway whether I have a say in it or not. Half these people weren't around. They don't know me, they don't know my music, they never saw a Bags show. Maybe what they've seen or heard is a tape or a video that doesn't represent me properly or read an interview where I say something stupid, which I did a lot of, so I decided to stop trying to let Alice Bag die and come out and say, "I'm Alice Bag. I am still Alice Bag, she's underneath all these layers, all these other names and all these other things that have happened to me. If you want to know me, if you want to know anything about me, you can ask me." We had so much stuff that we decided to put the website together and have someplace where I can express myself, and if somebody really wanted to ask me something or interview me or get it from the horse's mouth, they can do it. [whinnies]

www.alicebag.com



RAZORCAKE 55

BASEBALL FURIES



Interview by Josh

Pictures by Speedway Randy and Todd Taylor

Say what you will about the commodification and watering-down of underground music, but one of the things I like most about punk rock is that there are still bands that just play music. They don't play to get on the cover of NME, they don't play to get sponsored by the Gap, they just play, regardless of broken-down vans, audiences that don't care, and general bad luck. The Baseball Furies are one of those bands that have been plugging away despite what I considered an astonishing lack of attention for their first full-length, the modestly titled *Greater Than Ever*. With that record, they took their trashy garage punk sound and mutated it into one of the most venomous albums in years. The über-tight sloppiness of the *Motards*, the sneaky hooks of early *Replacements*, and the dense guitar and desperate lyrics of *Damaged-era Black Flag*, all spat out by four guys with no other outlet besides their music...

It's a musical lead pipe to the groin, to say the least. At some point between then and now, it became cool and hip to be a rock and roll dirtbag. It became the cool thing to do to look like a junky and cite Johnny Thunders as an influence. I could spend a lot of time wondering why *Greater Than Ever* wasn't on the tip of everyone's tongue, but it doesn't really matter. I already knew that bad taste was in the majority. I've got my copy and if some trust fund kids in too-tight pants don't, that's their loss. You could spend all day complaining about white belts and Spock haircuts, or you could get acquainted with one of the most bile-spitting punk bands you'll ever hear.

RAZORCAKE 56

Odie: Vocals and guitar

A-ron: Guitar

Jim: Bass

Matt: Drums

Josh: How do you guys think Buffalo played a part in your music, like what impact did it have?

Odie: It was just a lot of bored people that listened to good music and hung out and drank all the time. People would just feel bored and start a band.

Jim: I don't know. Buffalo's actually pretty fun. One thing I think about Buffalo is that there's not a lot going on, so you kinda have to make your own fun. Whenever there'd be a good show in Buffalo, it was because we would make it happen or we would bring people into town. As far as the

city's influence on the sound, that's hard to say. Most of the stuff that we liked wasn't from Buffalo except for the Goo Goo Dolls, who we're all big fans of, especially Matt.

Matt: No. No. [laughter] Shut up.

Jim: I'm not kidding, actually.

Odie: Yeah, we all grew up with that band.

A-ron: They used to be crazy.

Jim: They were like the craziest punk band and they got banned from all the clubs. They used to be called the Sex Maggots and they had to change the name because they got banned from everywhere. Some of the best shows I saw them play in basements in Buffalo and they were crazy. In my mind, being a sixteen-year-old

kid, their show was the most amazing thing I'd ever seen. Like, wow, that guy has no shoes on. That's crazy.

Matt: For the record, I don't like the Goo Goo Dolls. They suck.

Josh: I was going to ask you guys about that. Rev. Nørb once said that the all-time best album by a Buffalo band was *Jed* by the Goo Goo Dolls. Would you care to rebut that statement?

Jim: *Jed's* a good album, but I don't even know if that's the best Goo Goo Dolls album.

Odie: I kinda like *Hold Me Up* a little bit more.

Jim: I do, too. *Hold Me Up* is more of a power pop record and *Jed* is like a punk rock record, but *Jed's* production is terrible. *Jed*

was like taking a punk band and trying to make them sound like a metal band, because they were on Metal Blade. I'm going to have to go with *Hold Me Up*. But best Buffalo album of all time? Rick James? He's from Buffalo.

A-ron: Joe Public.

Jim: Ani DiFranco.

Odie: What about Milf? That was a good album.

Matt: What about Cannibal Corpse?

Odie: No, that's not included.

A-ron: Lollipop?

Jim: The Lollipop album came out after they moved away. Most people succeed after they leave Buffalo.

Josh: What disappointed you guys most about Buffalo and how do you think Chicago is an improvement?

Odie: The thing with Buffalo is that most of the people who live there just kinda want to get out of there, whereas in Chicago, there's a lot of people who enjoy living there. It's a little bit more positive in that way.

A-ron: There's a lot more shows.

Jim: Yeah, nothing major. I liked Buffalo and I still do. Nothing really disappointed me about it. There wasn't much going on as far as shows. We would kind of have to make the show happen. It was rare that a cool band would come to town without our involvement, but that did happen. The Mohawk Place, they always had really cool shows, even if it was without us helping them. I always got really pissed off when I lived there, because all of our friends in Detroit would get good shows and good bands would go there all the time. I'd be like, "You guys are totally fucking spoiled because there's so many good shows." In Buffalo, you'd be like, "Oh, I can't wait. Three weeks from now, Gasoline's going to be playing. It's going to be awesome." You'd look forward to it. Now that I live in Chicago, I'm like, "Who's playing tonight? Oh, my best friend's band is playing." I'm spoiled now. There's just so much that happens there.

Odie: We actually have to choose between shows on given nights.

Josh: Speaking of Gasoline, Jim, can you tell me about the last time you drank sake with Japanese houseguests?

Jim: I lived with Robert, who's in

the Tyrades as well, and we had revolving roommates, because for some reason people have a hard time living with us. I don't know why. But when we lived in Buffalo, Odie and A-ron's house was the party house, for some reason. We'd go drink there before the show and after the show, and me and Robert's place was the place that people slept after drinking at Odie's house until seven in the morning. Some time after Christmas one year, Fireballs of Freedom and Gasoline played at the Mohawk Place, and it was just a total debauchery night. They stayed at our house, and Robert had already gone to bed, so it was just me and those guys and I wanted to show them a good time. Someone had bought me a bottle of sake as a Christmas present as a joke, and one of the Gasoline guys, I think it was the drummer, found it and his eyes got super big. He started freaking out and I was like, "Drink it. Go ahead," so he's getting all these shot glasses lined up. I was like, "Okay, dude, settle down," and the Fireballs of Freedom guys said, "Well, that would be like you being in Japan drinking sake every day and then seeing a case of Miller High Life or something." So they're doing this non-stop, just powering shots of sake, and he's making me do it, like, "Hollywood-san, do it!" This is like seven o'clock in the morning and I'm just really hung over and tired. The last shot the guy took, right before he took it, he looked at me and said, "Sake: laugh at night, cry in morning." I was laughing so fucking hard. The next morning, he's laying in my living room with no covers, no pillow, just laying on the ground, and I can't remember his name, I was like, "Hiroshi, cry in morning?" And he said, "I no cry... but body cry. Two tears."

Josh: What was the Rust Belt Revolt?

Jim: It was a two-day fest that we had in 2000 and 2001. It was on my birthday, and Robert's birthday is the day after mine, so at first it just started out with me just getting bands that I wanted to see and having them play on my birthday, then it just got bigger and bigger and we decided to make it a two-day thing. The premise behind it was that the Furies had been out and met all

these cool people on tour that helped us a lot, so in my mind, I was like, "Well, I'll just get the funnest people I know, the people I really looked forward to seeing." None of the bands had full-length records out, they were all kind of unknown. We made a list and decided to just call people and try to get our favorite bands right off the bat and see what happens. We called up all these bands like the Mistreaters, the Guilty Pleasures (Matt's old band), Bantam Rooster, Clone Defects, Daylight Lovers, and I was just like, "I can't offer you guys any money, there's no guarantees, I'll give you a place to stay and you'll have the most fun you've ever had in your whole life." Everyone just drank for free and it was a real sense of brotherhood and excitement, like the Lost Sounds played before they had an album out. It was just really fun. Everyone was on the same block, there were no labels or anything, it was just people playing to each other. The place was so small that I knew if there were thirteen bands, the place was going to be packed and I didn't even care if anybody else shows up. It got to the point where it was such a party that playing your set got in the way, like you were actually sad about that happening. The next year, we were going to try to get different bands to play, but we just decided to ask the same bands that played the year before, like, "I'm sure there'll be some bands that say no," but everyone said yes, so it was the exact same bands.

Josh: If each of you guys could have a theme song that would play every time you walked into a room, what would it be?

A-ron: Mine's "Dog Style."

Odie: I don't know, I guess it depends on the night.

A-ron: Wait, what's the most important song you've ever heard?

Odie: "Rebel Yell" by Billy Idol.

Matt: "Wooly Bully."

Jim: That would be cool. That's going to be my wedding song. I think either the *Rocky* theme, that always gets people going, or the theme from *Benny Hill*. That's pretty good, too. He's getting chased around by chicks in bikinis. Either one.

Josh: Can you think of the weirdest thing your music has ever been compared to?

Jim: Weren't we called "shitpunk"? Wasn't that what Estrus called us?

A-ron: Scum rock?

Jim: Scum rock and shitpunk. The one-sheet said we were shitpunk.

Josh: Can you think of one band that, if you were compared to them, you would quit playing music forever?

Matt: The Goo Goo Dolls. [laughter]

Josh: This is the most they've been mentioned in print in years.

Odie: Oh, the Barenaked Ladies. I really fucking hate that band. They drive me nuts.

Matt: Steely Dan.

Jim: Functional Blackouts. [laughter]

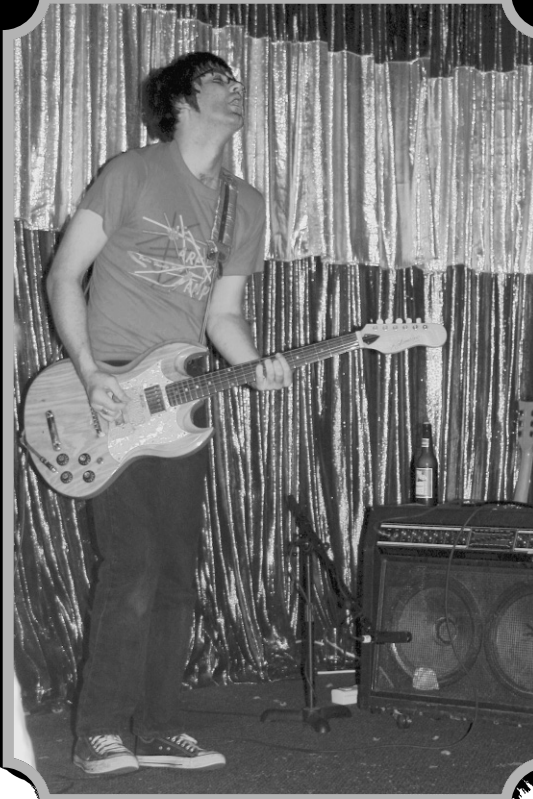
Matt: The Ponys. [laughter]

Josh: What's one direction this band is never going to go in?

Matt: The right one.

Jim: The easy, right path. The one where everything works out for us, where we put out records that are less than three years old and the artwork isn't fucked up and they sound good.

One time I downed a bottle of Crème de Menthe and filled it up with Scope, and my mom didn't figure it out until she made a batch of cookies where the recipe called for Crème de Menthe.



Matt: The one where we might make a little money. That's the direction we'll never go in.

Jim: Musically, that's one thing I think is actually kind of cool about this band is that, in my mind, we don't have a "thing." If we want to write a country song, we'll write a country song. It's whatever we like to do, it doesn't matter.

Josh: So why does it take so long for your records to come out?

Jim: I don't think we're the smartest people, and I think that doesn't help us much in our band decisions.

A-ron: It's not really a smartness thing.

Jim: We make poor decisions, I think.

Odie: Well, yeah, but...

A-ron: We recorded this one (*Let It Be*) in July of 2001, we moved in August, lost a drummer, gained a drummer, then we had to do the artwork...

Jim: That has nothing to do with putting out a record.

A-ron: Yeah, but we had to do a lot of shit, like get jobs when we moved.

Jim: How long did that take?

A-ron: It took me two months.

Jim: Two months? It took three years for the fucking album to come out!

A-ron: Then we had to mix it...

Matt: And remix it...

Odie: A failed tape transfer...

Jim: Yeah, okay, so that's not that bright.

A-ron: Well, that's not our fault.

Jim: That's just the way this band is. I'm actually kind of proud of that. We're from Buffalo and things don't come very easily to people from Buffalo. But the thing about being from Buffalo is that you never quit.

A-ron: You never win.

Jim: You never win but you keep trying.

Josh: You go to the Super Bowl four years in a row...

A-ron: And then you're wide right.

Jim: You just keep going.

A-ron: Or his foot's in the crease.

Jim: You can never be defeated if you're still trying, right, A-ron?

A-ron: Fucking foot's in the crease.

Josh: What's the most disgusting bathroom you've ever had to use?

Matt: That fucking one in Missoula where you guys kept coming in on me.

A-ron: That wasn't that gross, it was just hilarious.

Jim: It was this really small bathroom in Missoula.

Matt: Jay's Upstairs.

Jim: Yeah, but we were downstairs during the day and it was all these burly sports fans, local logger

mountain jerks. Matt had to use the facilities.

Matt: Number two.

Jim: The bathroom was real small and there was a little mini-wall, no door to the stall, just a little mini-wall, so you could see the person's legs and head but not their ass. It was just a real bad design.

Matt: And there was no lock on the bathroom door.

Jim: No one would ever shit in there unless they were having an absolute emergency. So Matt's like, "Jim, watch the door for me." Then A-ron comes up and has to piss, so I let him go right in without saying anything. As he opened the door, I see Matt squatting on the toilet and being horrified but laughing at the same time. We're all just laughing about it, and then when A-ron comes out, immediately Odie walks up, so I let him go right in as well. And Matt's yelling, like, "Ahhh! Get out of here!" When Odie came out, I decided to walk in, because that would be the only funny thing left to do, so I'm about to go in, and there's some burly logger jerk coming up to go in, and I'm like, "This is gonna be fucking awesome!"

Matt: So yeah, that was pretty bad.

A-ron: You didn't end up shitting either, did you?

Matt: I can do that anyway. What

about the poop shelves in Germany?

Jim: Fuck Germany. It wasn't Germany, it was the Netherlands. It was boring.

Josh: Can you think of the first band you ever heard that made you want to play punk rock?

Jim: For me, it was definitely a hundred percent the Replacements, and the song was "Takin' a Ride." I was kind of a late bloomer for music in general. I actually hated music because I couldn't relate to it. All that hair metal stuff... I wasn't wearing makeup. I was getting beat up by Irish Catholic guys all the time. Makeup wasn't something that people did in south Buffalo. The bands that people did like there, like U2 and stuff, those kids were the kids that would give me a hard time so I had to hate those bands by association. Then I skated for a while and I liked the quintessential skate bands like Suicidal Tendencies and stuff, and I liked the speed of it and it wasn't metal, but it still didn't really relate to me. Then my friend's older brother made me a mix tape of the Descendents, Goo Goo Dolls, and the Replacements on it, and the first time I heard the Replacements, I was like, "Okay, I get it. This is perfect." It still holds a soft spot for me. Even though they had some of



the worst songs in the world, their hits are fucking awesome, especially *Stink* and *Sorry Ma*, those records are fucking awesome.

Odie: Probably the Goo Goo Dolls.

Matt: That made you want to play?

Odie: Yeah, I think so. Actually, maybe not. It was probably the Pistols or the Ramones or something like that. It could be Billy Idol. I remember liking that a lot. When I was eight years old, I was like, "That's fuckin' where it's at."

Jim: I didn't even want to be in a band for a while.

A-ron: I think it was Thorpe's fault.

Jim: The only guy that I liked in south Buffalo, he wanted to start a band so he made me play bass. Chris Thorpe made me be in a band.

Matt: Probably the Misfits. Anything that had to do with skateboarding.

A-ron: I don't have one band. My friend taught me how to play a bassline and that made me want to play.

Josh: Do you remember what bassline?

A-ron: "Gigantic" by the Pixies. And he played guitar. You could plug two things into his amp. I tell horrible stories.

Jim: And he ruins other people's stories.

Josh: How has the success of the Tyrades affected this band?

Odie: I think both help out each other.

A-ron: The only thing is scheduling, really.

Jim: It's limiting. Sometimes I think that if I wasn't in both bands, both bands would be twice as far as they are, in a way. You'd practice twice as much and you'd write twice as many songs and play twice as many shows, in theory. It's not like the Tyrades are really that successful, or the Furies, either. It doesn't take much to play to twenty kids who don't care about you.

Josh: So when you write songs, how do you decide which band it's going to be for?

Jim: It's not that difficult. For a while, I was in a power pop mode so I just tried to write power pop stuff for the Furies, and then when Odie and A-ron get a hold of the song, when we play it live, it doesn't become a power pop song. I'm not a very good guitar player, so the songs I write are definitely my style of guitar playing, which is poor but spastic. It would be almost an insult to tell Odie and A-ron "Here, play these two notes that don't even make any sense together." That doesn't need to be said to them. When I sit down, I don't just write a song and then say whether it's going to work for one band or another. Usually, I just say I'm going to write a Tyrades song or a Furies song. Odie and A-ron work together writing songs and I'm kind of my own camp, and lately they've been coming up with such cool stuff that I don't feel a lot of pressure to write songs for the Furies right now, even though I still do. Since I'm more the songwriter for the Tyrades, I kinda spend more time thinking about writing songs for them.

Josh: Have any of you ever blown anything up in a microwave?

Matt: Yes.

Josh: Explain.

Matt: Acid and whatever I could get my hands on in high school.

Odie: What kind of acid? Like streetside acid?

Matt: No, like LSD. I was on

LSD and I knew stuff blew up in the microwave. Peeps blow up, lightbulbs, tin foil...

Jim: I never put anything in a microwave. My family never got anything good. We were always the last people to get good stuff. My parents got cable, like, four years ago. We had a rotary dial phone forever that weighed like fifty pounds. I never really fucked around with anything.

Josh: If you could control what was on TV for one hour, what would you show?

A-ron: I'd say good bands.

Jim: Seeing someone getting hit in the nuts is always good. An hour of that would be pretty rad.

Matt: What about wrestling?

Jim: I was thinking wrestling but there's enough wrestling already on TV right now.

Matt: A-ron telling stories.

A-ron: That would get everyone to turn off their TVs.

Jim: Literacy would go up in America.

A-ron: Yeah, people would start reading books.

Josh: What's the most embarrassing thing your parents ever caught you doing?

Jim: I was boring. I never got caught doing anything because I never did anything.

Odie: I got in trouble a lot but I was never embarrassed by it. I fell in a pit of plaster once when I was thirteen when I was drunk.

Jim: What about the old cookie recipe?

Odie: I started drinking when I was kinda young, maybe like twelve or thirteen. My parents really didn't drink too much, so there were all these bottles of liquor in the basement. You'd do the old trick of watering stuff down, that sort of thing. It was all the nasty shit they'd get for Christmas, lots of schnapps. So one time I downed a bottle of Crème de Menthe and filled it up with Scope, and my mom didn't figure it out until she made a batch of cookies where the recipe called for Crème de Menthe. [laughter]

Jim: Did you really think you weren't going to get caught?

Odie: No. I mean, like I said, they really didn't drink that much. I figured the bottle would just stay down in the basement and they would never know the difference.

My punishment should have been to eat the whole batch of cookies, like if you catch your kids smoking, you're supposed to make them smoke the whole pack.

Josh: Have any of you ever had a bad run-in with the police?

Jim: I'm actually the only person in the history of this band to have never been arrested. My dad was a cop, so I always got away with the dumb stuff, like I'd get pulled over for speeding and I'd just tell them that my dad was a cop.

Matt: I got arrested for stealing cable. [laughter] I lived with one of the guys from the Ponys and a bunch of other people and one day I just decided to steal cable. When we got caught, all of us got arrested, and while we were sitting in jail watching TV, that commercial came on...

Jim: The stealing cable one?

Matt: Yeah. We felt like such dumb asses. With all the money that we had to pay in fines and court costs, we could have bought cable for three years.

Josh: Do you think that as a band, you have bad timing? Because...

Everyone: Yes!

Jim: Yes, yes, the answer is already yes! It doesn't matter what the rest of your question is, the answer is yes.

Josh: Well then what's kept you guys going? You've been around for something like eight years...

Odie: Actually, it's nine years now.

Josh: Nine years is almost unheard of for a band like this.

Odie: We don't really give a shit about all that stuff, like our bad timing or the fact that our records take a long time to come out. We're just doing this to have fun and we still have fun and it doesn't matter to us if other people don't like us.

Jim: Seriously, the thing that I like most about being in a band is playing shows and practicing and getting to hang out with my friends. The best part about touring is coming into a town and saying, "Oh man, I can't wait to see this person or that person."

A-ron: What else would we do? Watch crappy TV all day?

Jim: Maybe if there was a twenty-four hour channel of people getting hit in the nuts, I'd watch TV. The only person that I play music for is myself, and the rest of that stuff doesn't matter.



VON IVA

Interview by Kat Jelson and Jen Hitchcock



Photos by Kat Jelson

A few months ago, my interview cohort, Jen Hitchcock, and I saw San Francisco's Von Iva in LA at El Cid and were bowled over by their sexy confidence, on-stage strut, and we've-put-you-under-our-spell ability to get an audience of "LA hip" (and I mean the whole audience) clapping and shaking their asses to the band's sinful and soulful dance-rock gospel. Following their set, and still

feeling buzzed with being drenched in musical euphoria, I took aside their bassist, Elizabeth Davis (x-7 Year Bitch) and simply put it out there—I told her, "Your music makes me want to get drunk, dance and make out with everyone." With a wild grin on her face, she approved and said,

"That's what we are hoping for."

Ladies and gentlemen, the ladies of Von Iva are here to tell you, "It's all about the love these days." And with Jillian Iva teasing, "I'll pick you up, slam you down, make you mine," (please do!) who are you not to believe 'em?

Kat: Who are you when no one is looking?

Jillian: Tina Turner.

Elizabeth: Although, she is Tina Turner when people are looking, too.

Jillian: I walk around just like...

Kat: Struttin' and having an accent that you don't really have?

Elizabeth: Jeff Spicoli.

Jillian: Becky's Bill Gates when no one is looking. No, wait. Who is the guy that started Apple?

Becky: I don't know. Help me. Who am I when no one is looking?

Elizabeth: I don't know. I've never seen it.

Jen: What was the biggest fashion mistake ever and did you participate?

Elizabeth: I know what mine is easy. Did you ever watch *Three's Company*? I tried to do the Chrissie hair. Some kind of weird ponytail way above my ear... with all my hair on one side. Hairsprayed the fuck out of it. Or trying to perm straight hair to make it really curly. Not happening.

Jillian: I'd have to say that mine was hair, too. I wore a lot of bad clothes, but you know... I did the thing where you have "wings." In sixth grade it became a contest as to who could get their hair to go out and up more.

Elizabeth: Like a frozen waterfall.

Jen: Are you from back East?

Jillian: Oklahoma, actually. We had hairspray there.

Becky: I think the worst fashion mistake is probably pleated pants. But I have never participated in it. Maybe one day I'll rock the pleated pants. But

Jimmy Page wore pleated pants.

Lay Lay: I know exactly what mine is because I hurt myself when I did it. It was in fifth grade and I had a breakdancer boyfriend. His name was Tito Gonzales. It was really cool to have one half of your head shaved, so that when you were breakdancing the other side would flip over. I really wanted to do that but I couldn't get my parents to allow me to do that, so I took a Bic razor and I cut my hair really short and then I shaved half way up to my head. It was really bad, it looked really bad, and I had razor burn and cuts all the way up my head.

Kat: What makes one of your own performances stand out for you?

Jillian: I think when we can all hear each other on stage and there are really good stage monitors. We are all really connected that way. It helps us all connect in general and have a really good, stand-out performance.

Becky: Sometimes when we are playing and I look around, I get really excited and I know it is a really fun show.

Kat: It's pretty impressive that when you played at El Cid you got the LA crowd to dance. No one in LA moves. I don't dance, and this one definitely doesn't dance [pointing to Jen], and we were both moving.

Jen: Everyone was dancing!

Jillian: That is such a good feeling. Even crowds that don't move, after the show you can tell they were moved in some way even though they weren't dancing. But whenever you can get people dancing, that is the ultimate right there.

Becky: We played this one show and there were a lot of goth kind of kids. The singer for the Phantom Limbs was standing in the front row, kind of freaking out.

Jillian: I was like, "Does he hate it? Does he like it?" He had these fake scabs on his face. He took off a fake scab and threw it at me. That was his ode to Von Iva.

Becky: Winning over people who you wouldn't expect to be freaking out.

Jillian: That's when it is a good show, too.

Jen: You make a lot of eye contact. When you are looking down into the audience, are you actually "seeing" people and how they are reacting?

Jillian: I do. There have been a couple of shows where the lights were right in my eyes and I couldn't see people, and it was really disconcerting. It kind of

heavy sound—something that people could latch on to immediately. The way that Elizabeth plays, she is very rhythmic and she can just pound out bass lines. Adding Becky on keyboards and organ, the space was filled. We played around with a guitar player but realized something about Jillian's voice in that set up, with just the rhythmic section—just really heavy rhythms—her voice comes across way more intensely

Jillian: Throw a little quirky Devo in there and you got a Von Iva soufflé.

Jen: Since there are so many Bush voters who probably read *Razorcake* magazine, what would you like to say to all of the people who voted for Bush?

Becky: Thanks for helping us to get a revolution going.

Jillian: Wizen up and check the facts. America just seems like such a trusting nation and so easily persuaded, and it shouldn't be that way.

Jen: I'm going to start a charity and put donation boxes in all of the democratic states for people to donate books to send to all of the red states. Obviously, there is a big problem.

Jillian: It is hard for me, because coming from Oklahoma I know that kind of southern, old-school mentality. Religion comes into play, but I don't want knock that part

of it. It is sad how uneducated this nation is, and I think that is the biggest problem—lack of education in the nation.

Elizabeth: Or selective education. A lot of well-educated people are Republican. Their news sources are really limited. What I would say to people, in all honesty, is diversify where you're getting your information. Love yourself. Don't hate yourself. A lot of people are voting in their worst interests. I think that a lot of it is not believing that they can be better. It's really deep. The introspection of what is happening to our nation needs to be individual and really deep. It needs to start there.

Kat: There has been talk about Gina Schock (drummer of the Go-Go's) recording your album?

Elizabeth: Maybe, I don't know. She came to our show. That's the extent of it.

Jillian: Per Manuel (the owner Cochon Records), she has expressed interest and really loves Von Iva, but we haven't been in contact with her at all.

Kat: That would be crazy! I didn't even know she knew how to do that.

Jillian: I went to audio engineering school. Maybe she and I can do it together! Buddy up!

Kat: Are you recording an album now or are you in the middle of anything like that now?

Lay Lay: We have an EP that is going to be released in January.

Elizabeth: On Manuel's label, Cochon.

Lay Lay: One thing that Von Iva does that we are kind of proud of is that we are an all-female band and we have really taken the tools that it takes to record your own music and learned how to use those tools to do pre-production and things like that. So whenever



because there is nothing else there taking away from it.

Kat: There is no noodling. There is something about guitar players. It takes away from it when they are just... [air guitar noodling]

Jillian: [guitar imitation] Lookatmelookatmelookatmelooooowwwwww!

Lay Lay: If you listen to a lot of '70s funk soul stuff, the guitar really is an accent sort of instrument. The bass, and sometimes an organ, are really pounding it out.

Jillian: I think as long as you fill all the frequencies, then you are doing okay, which we do with the perfect balance between the organ and the bass.

Jen: If Von Iva were a shade of lipstick, what would it be? What would the name be?

Jillian: I think we'd be a really pretty '70s kind of gold, and it would be called "Solid Gold"... or maybe red and called "Sexpot Red."

Kat: You got that answer down. Last night were you thinking, "I wonder what color lipstick we would be?"

Jillian: ...what if lipstick comes into play?

Jen: You have to be prepared!

Jillian: A girl is always prepared for lipstick.

Kat: What single musical inspiration links you all together?

Elizabeth: Tina Turner is pretty strong.

Lay Lay: Maybe it is the emotional intensity of Tina, the rhythmic madness of the rhythm section in Zeppelin, and the soulful dancey-ness of Sly and the Family Stone.

bummed me out because it's something that I really like. It has been challenging for me to really connect with people so I make it a point to do it. Especially if someone is out there, picking their nose—I'll stare them down. Or if someone is really into it, it is so fun to have someone dancing and you look over at them and a simple wink sends the biggest grin across their face. I really like that part of it. It makes me feel like I'm challenging myself and connecting with strangers, which is always fun.

Kat: Did you always intend for your band to not have a guitar?

Lay Lay: I think when we first started we really wanted to do a really dancey, bottom-

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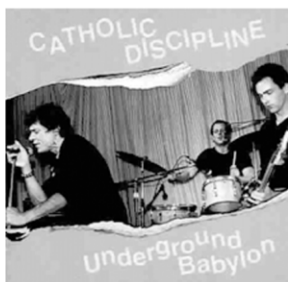
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we write a song, or whenever we're in the process of writing songs, we are always thinking about how we are going to do it when we are recording it. We are definitely one of those bands that take our time and really have a higher plan than just recording music and putting it out immediately. There is definitely a lot of thought and a lot of buttons that are pressed over and over again to get what we are happy with.

Jillian: Every band has a penchant towards perfectionism when it comes to trying to write. Our EP has been a long time in the making because we really want it to sound the best it can, obviously, and we just want to be able to stand behind it. Also, the whole stigma of a girl group—we want people to know that we're fucking very capable and able to record and play our music and all of the above. We want it really to come across as professional as it can.

Kat: Is it still like that? Do you get a lot of that?

Jillian: It's not too bad. People are just like, "Whoa, you chicks rock!" And it's like, "Yeah, and...?"

Lay Lay: For our band it seems like it's cool, but I wouldn't know what other all-girl bands experiences are like.

Elizabeth: It depends on the genre. We don't have a genre, so people aren't trying to put us in a box, which is nice. But if you were playing heavy metal or some other type of music that was really defined and male-dominated, I think you would have a tough time.

Jen: I just have to think of those *Rolling Stone* covers that are "Women in Rock," and it is all the same women.

Becky: Isn't like, every year the year of "Women in Rock?"

Jen: It's always the same women. And most of them aren't really "rock." It feels like they're stretching, like they *have* to find some women for this cover.

Jillian: Mariah Carey or some shit like that. Hello?

Kat: She maybe rocks in the bedroom or something like that. I don't know.

Jillian: She *smokes* rock.

Kat: They had an issue with the best 200 guitar players and the only female guitar players were Joan Jett and one other.

Elizabeth: You mean like best, as in most technically proficient?

Kat: Yes.

Elizabeth: I'm sorry, but...bad choice.

Kat: There are so many. It is unbelievable that they can only come up with two, and the other 198 were males.

Becky: There are so many though!

Jillian: With guys, it's like their penis. They're like, "Here's my guitar WANK WANK WANK."

Becky: I think that even though things are

becoming more acceptable for women to not just be sex symbols but be musicians, there's still a long way to go. The media is run and owned and made so that the people in middle American can taste it and understand it quickly and buy it.

Jen: I don't know how far we have come, really. They still market women so that they have to fit in this certain box.

Lay Lay: It's true for guys, too. Like, cute boy bands.

Elizabeth: And then there's Nickelback.

Especially if someone is out there, picking their nose... I'll stare them down.

They sound like shit, their songs suck and they're ugly.

Kat: You tell it like it is, Elizabeth. [To Lay Lay] Is it true you just started playing drums just for this band?

Lay Lay: Yeah.

Kat: That's crazy! You've never played an instrument before and all of the sudden you were like, "I think I can do that," and went out and bought a drum kit.

Lay Lay: It didn't really happen like that. It was sort of like... Yeah, I guess it did kind of happen like that.

Jillian: She played keyboards.

Elizabeth: This is the second time that Lay Lay had joined a band without playing the instrument first. When we started playing music together in Clone, we were just looking for a keyboard player. I was like, "Lay Lay doesn't play keyboards but she is cool and she likes the same music we like."

Jillian: She is the most determined individual I have ever met. If she is going to make something happen, it's going to happen and it's going to be good.

Lay Lay: I have to say that anybody who wants to pick up an instrument, when you are playing music with other individuals who are really talented, the learning curve and the learning process is so much quicker. When you are playing drums with someone who is one of the best bass players ever, man or woman, it's a lot easier. It's a feeling that comes into your body rhythmically. I have this rule that I think if you're a good dancer, you are probably a good drummer.

Jen: Has anyone ever told you that you look like someone famous? And if so, who? And... do you agree? Because I've had people tell me I look like Janis Joplin, and I'm always wondering, do they mean the bloated drinking Janis or the speeded-out slim Janis?

Jillian: I've had Parker Posey. And I was like, "My forehead ain't that big!"

Kat: That's great!

Elizabeth: I used to get Belinda Carlisle. That was a long time ago. Back in the day we had, like, the same hair color. Now I get some actress—I don't know who she is, but she was on *Third Rock from the Sun*.

Jillian: We have actually told Lay Lay that she looks like Pamela Anderson.

Elizabeth: She's a natural version of Pamela Anderson.

Lay Lay: I think I look more like Bruce Hornsby.

Kat: Do you feel optimistic about what is going on musically in your own city and otherwise? Do you get excited about the scene that you are in?

Jillian: I don't really think we are in a scene in San Francisco, per se. We play with such a wide gamut of bands with different sounds. I was really excited about the

San Francisco scene when the Vanishing was still there. Jesse evokes the same kind of raw performance energy that I do—kind of cathartic and a little bit crazy. As far as any other band, speaking for myself as a singer and performing the way I do, there is really no one doing anything like that, so I have a hard time relating to people. I think it is pretty open-ended.

Jen: You can kind of play with anybody.

Jillian: We've played with so many different types of sounds.

Elizabeth: Von Iva kind of go between the lines.

Jillian: I'm sorry. I keep getting distracted by the transvestites walking by. Did I answer the question?

Kat: Yeah.

Jillian: I think a lot of what has taken over San Francisco is garage rock. There aren't as many we're-here-to-make-you-dance bands.

Kat: What band do you like recorded, but not live? And vice versa.

Elizabeth: We have to diss a band?

Jillian: Maybe we can answer it with what we have experienced ourselves. Live, it's such an amazing, bombastic situation. I think when people see us live, it's just easy to win them over because our live shows are great, as far as I'm concerned.

Kat: That's awesome! You go with that.

Jillian: That's one thing that we really struggled with in our recording process. How do we capture this raw energy and put it out there on this medium that isn't really personal at all, and how do we make it personal since our shows are very personal. Make it have feeling... It's really hard to package that and put it out there. How do you capture the magic and put it out there.

Jen: Enhance the CD?

Jillian: We have an enhanced CD!

Elizabeth: Our EP on Cochon Records is going to have six songs and a video.

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RAZORCAKE 63





Interview by Todd Taylor

Pictures by Waka, Anna,

and Takeya

There are plenty of good reasons why you've probably never heard of Smalltown. They're Swedish. They don't have a record out in the States. In a lot of ways, 2004 has a lot in common with 1982—while bands on the big stages are eliciting yawns, bands that are playing back yard parties and basements are, truly, some of the best on the planet. It's time, once again, to get your fingernails dirty and start digging for the musical diamonds that aren't playing in a big club, aren't in slick magazines, or aren't being broadcast over the airwaves. Seek out treasure on a tattered map with bad directions. Find something that hasn't been "discovered" by a company that wastes more money in one day than you'll make in your entire lifetime. The good news is that legions of great punk bands are again underground, unmolested by the cheapening effects of worrying how their hair looks when they score that "righteous, brah" cell phone endorsement. Lately, many of the banner holders of melodic, mid-paced, bouncy punk rock, reminiscent simultaneously of The Jam and The Clash, have taken a weird turn into the worst of hip hop's excesses. It's sad, to me, to see that bands only a year or two ago who were shouting for

revolution and a fair shake for the working class have settled and found "success" to mean endless hookers, the overnight appearance of sleeve tattoos, and personal weight trainers.

So, it takes an obscure, brilliant Swedish band to have it all come back into focus with two stunning back-to-back full-length releases (one's a collection of all their 7" and splits). You see, whatever punk jacket you're wearing, whatever punk skin you wish to flash, music always boils down to this: good songs that stand up on their own over time. It's no mistake that Smalltown's first full length is simply titled *The Music*. Take the bounding, class-savvy exuberance of Chicago's Strike, the your-name's-on-this-bullet lock and load of Florida's Beltones, the bullet proof vest melodies of Ireland's Stiff Little Fingers, and you've got the basic idea. Then forget about predecessors and pedigrees. Just listen to how fresh music can sound and how it can make you feel like life doesn't suck so bad while remaining unafraid to challenge you to a thought or two.

I feel sorry for folks who say that's it's all been done before, and better. Parts of them must be dead inside.

smalltown



Todd: How long ago did Smalltown start, and could you just give me a little background on everybody?

Kalle: I used to be in a pop punk outfit in the mid-'90s called Blinker, and when that ended, I felt I didn't have anything to do for a while. At one point we did a reunion show, and I guess I then realised how much I'd missed playing in a band. I had written a few new songs for that show, and since Blinker wasn't playing anymore, I felt I wanted to have another band to play that stuff in. I asked a friend of mine, our drummer Kalle, to help me out, if we could rehearse and play my songs in a new band. He was into it, and we asked another friend to fill in on the bass just so we could play the songs. We didn't know it was going to be a real band. When we decided that it was something that we wanted to do, our bass player jumped ship since he already had other bands that he wanted to focus on. As a replacement we brought in the guy who's still with us, Lobbe. We took the name Smalltown around the same time.

Todd: Why Smalltown?

Kalle: At the very beginning we were actually named "Smalltime." We didn't release anything under that name luckily, since it kind of sucks. The only things left are a few ugly stickers. I somehow got the idea of changing it to Smalltown pretty early on, and made a logo we were happy with, so we just switched. I'm glad now we did. I like the name. So many bands are stuck with bad names they must hate, but have to keep since they're already out everywhere.

Todd: But you come from a small town in Sweden, correct?

Kalle: Yeah, yeah, for sure. The town we come from is called Oskarshamn, in the southeast part of Sweden, and in the... I don't know the word in English. "County," maybe? There's thirty thousand and in the city itself, it's fifteen thousand.

Todd: Is the town famous for anything?

Kalle: If you would go to somewhere else in Sweden and just ask a person on the street about

our city, they would probably know where it is because we have one of Sweden's four nuclear power plants.

Todd: Is it true that Oskershamn has the world's largest advent calendar?

Kalle: Have you seen that on the internet?

Todd: Yeah, your tourist board promotes that.

Kalle: That's stupid. [laughs] This year, they had something going on, so they took the biggest building in the middle of the city and turned certain windows in it into windows in an advent calendar. I don't know what that was, but it's not something that's there all the time, they just did that for some reason.

Todd: What's the most comfortable thing about growing up in a small town, the comforts of living there that you didn't quite appreciate? When I was growing up, the thing that I wanted to do the most was get out of it, but then after a while, I realized that there was a lot of good things about it that I kind of took for granted.

Kalle: I feel exactly the same way you do. When I was around fifteen, I thought everything sucked and I just wanted to get out of there, like everything was going on everywhere else but here. But I turn twenty-eight this year and like you said, I started to realize what makes people actually want to live here. What's good about it is that you can take your bike and ride it wherever you want. We don't have a lot of problems with violence. Of course, stuff happens, but you don't have to be afraid all the time. I have a brother who has lived in the US for fifteen years and he has two kids who moved back over here about four years ago. They thought it was great because they grew up in Las Cruces.

Todd: In New Mexico?

Kalle: Yeah. Over there, they lived in a suburban house somewhere, and if you wanted to go visit your friend, you might as well be on the other side of town. You'd have to take the freeway; you couldn't just ride your bike somewhere. I guess the structure of cities over there is different, too, like you have a mall with all the stores in it, not like a bunch of different shops that you can cruise around and go to. What's also cool about a smaller place like this is that when you move to your own place, it's easy to find and it's cheap. When you're in a band, you can get your own practice space for cheap and leave your equipment there. I know people in

other cities who have to rent their space for a day and then haul all their stuff out at the end of that day.

Todd: Or they have what they call a lockout where they share it with a couple of other bands, but it's still another expense, another couple hundred bucks a month just to do that.

Kalle: The downside is that not a lot of big bands pass by here and there's not much going on here. The people who are my age that still live here have pretty much settled down, more or less, so it can be pretty lonely.

Todd: Where is the nearest large city?

Kalle: It depends on the definition of large cities. There aren't any in Sweden, actually. Stockholm has about a million people, and that's about three and a half hours away. That's not really far by American standards, but there's no other big cities around. If you want to go somewhere where stuff happens, you'd probably have to go to Stockholm.

Todd: What's your fondest childhood memory of growing up there?

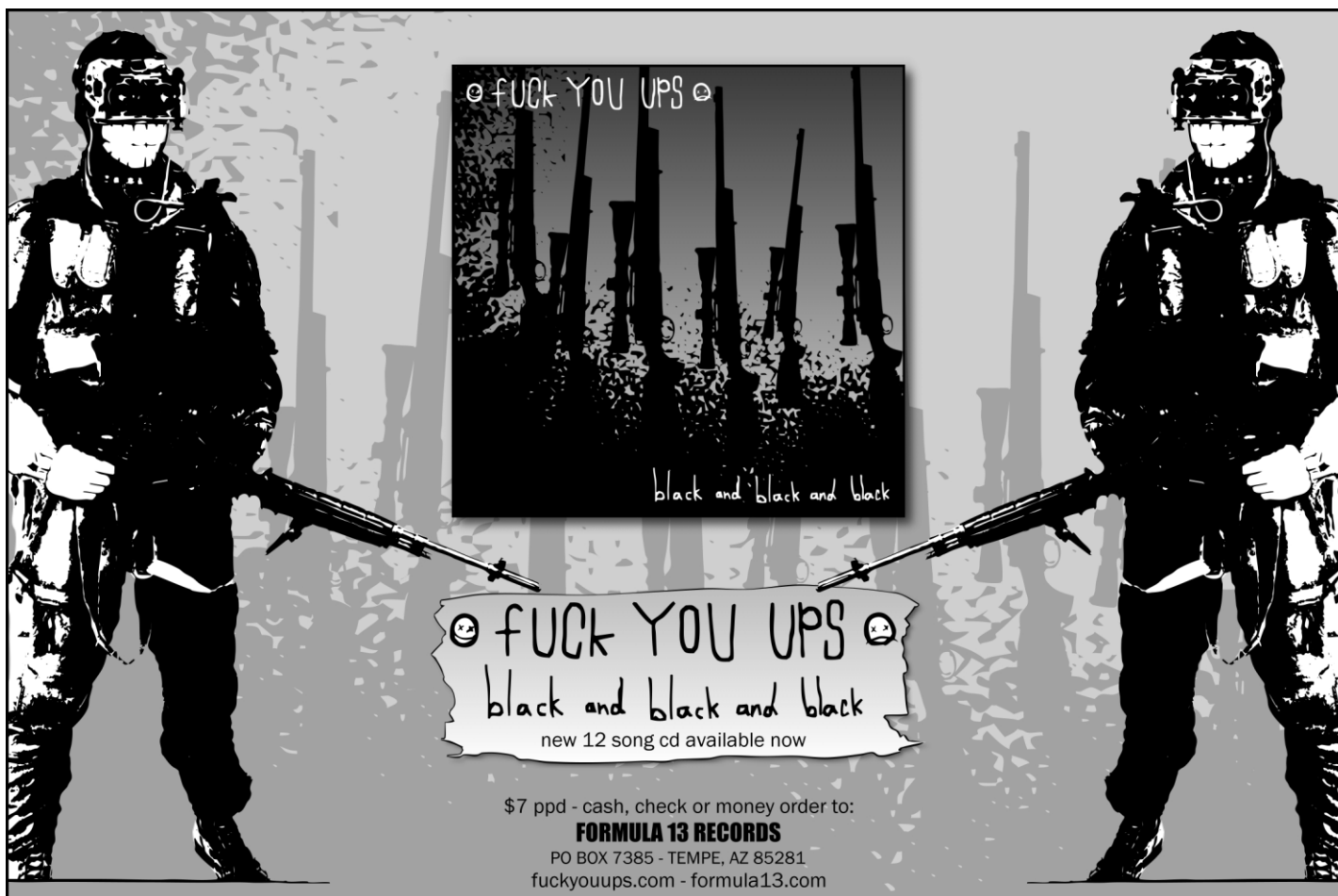
Kalle: I don't know if I can remember one specific, isolated incident, but when I grew up, we lived in a house outside of the city, by the sea. Just yesterday, I was riding my bike out there with a friend and I told him that I guess I didn't really appreciate it when I was a kid, how great it was here. Like I said, you can ride your bike or make a raft and swim, cruise up into the woods and build a little tree house. It was just a real privilege for a kid to grow up in the nice environment with all the natural surroundings.

Todd: But no isolated incident?

Kalle: Well, maybe when I first discovered that I could make music. We had a music teacher in ninth grade who really insisted that everyone try really hard to actually be creative with music. She took acoustic guitars and put them in our hands and we sat in a group of maybe twelve people. She would point to four of us and say, "Okay, you guys have the G chord, and you guys have the C, and you guys have the D," and she bent our fingers in place, and then we discovered that we were actually playing a song. I started thinking, isn't it more difficult than this? So I went home and got the guitar that my dad had that was in really bad shape, but I managed to learn a couple of songs. Before that, it was all a big mystery. I had no idea that a song was just two chords or three.

Todd: In the song "The Music," you drop lines from the Clash, the Jam, the Stiff Little Fingers, Black Flag, and the Ramones. What

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kid to grow up in the nice
environment with all the
natural surroundings.



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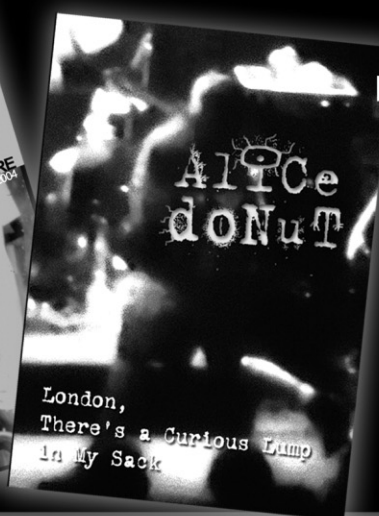
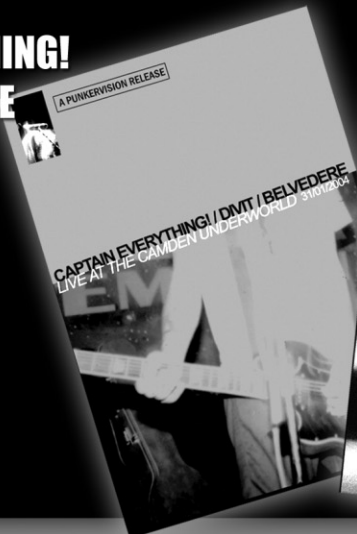
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kind of steps have you guys taken to draw inspiration from that but to avoid being enslaved to it? Because so many street punk bands and oi bands seem so standardized, like a paint-by-numbers kind of thing. I think you guys have stepped out beyond that.

Kalle: I guess, in a way, our sound is what would happen if you took our record collections and threw them into some sort of blender, that's what would come out. It's not something we've decided to do. This is just what comes out when we write songs. It's just a mix of all the influences. I can listen to a song and hear a part and go, "Oh, that's cool, I'm going to use that." If it's an obvious influence from another song, we try to make it clear that it's obviously from another song so it doesn't make people say, "I can totally hear where this comes from but they try to mask it as their own."

Todd: Did Steve from the Newtown Neurotics really say that Smalltown's cover of "When the Oil Runs Out" was the best he'd ever heard?

Kalle: He did. He sent me a letter saying that it was the best cover a Neurotics song he'd ever heard. He said it didn't leave his CD player.

Todd: That must feel pretty good then, a little bit of redemption.

Kalle: Of course. We were really proud to have them say that. It was just a coincidence that I ran into his email address on the internet in the first place. There was a line that I couldn't make out when I tried to make out the lyrics, and then I searched for it on the internet. I thought it was a fansite or something, so I sent an email asking if they knew where I could get the lyrics for the song, and he replied back, "I actually wrote the song. Feel free to

metal hardcore in the mid-'90s, but I was true to the melodic stuff.

Todd: What keeps you excited about it?

Kalle: A few years ago, I bought a lot more records than I do now. I thought more of the new music back then was good, but not too much of the new music now excites me. I don't listen to as much new punk as I used to, but when it comes to playing, I'm still excited because I think we do something. I think we're pretty good when we're at our best. I want to make good records. In the last year, things have picked up a little and we've gotten to release more records. If nothing would have happened, I'm not sure how much we would have played. But then we got inspired by all that. We actu-



Todd: Like when the parts are like a collage, you make it real obvious that it is, like, "We're giving a nod to this band."

Kalle: I think that's cool. I think that we certainly make something new of it, but the whole idea of that song itself is a nod to a bunch of older influences. People will know what we are up to.

Todd: I see it in the context of bands like the Strike, Practice or the Beltones—bands all over the world who have taken that sound and really modified it so it's still exciting. Were there any classic Swedish punk bands that you looked toward as a kid?

Kalle: Ebba Grön, who were super duper great and sang in Swedish, which is probably why they're not very well known outside of Sweden. They were clearly influenced by the Clash as well; they were at it between '78 and '82 or something like that. You can hear them develop in sort of the same way as the Clash, like they started off very rough and punky and they developed their arrangement skills more and got more complex.

record as long as I can hear it, and here's the lyrics by the way."

Todd: What first informed you about punk rock? Basically, why punk rock and not some other form of self-expression? What were the elements that made you go, "Wow, I want to do this?"

Kalle: Before, when I was younger, all of my friends were into metal, Twisted Sister and all that stuff, big back patches. I wasn't really into music; I was just doing what kids do. I'd listen to songs on the radio that I'd be embarrassed to mention now, but I didn't really collect records and listen to music. Then I started skateboarding with a lot of other kids, and this one kid gave me a compilation tape with the Undertones, the Misfits, the Clash, and a lot of Swedish bands like Asta Kask, the Ramones of course, and when I heard that, it was something that I hadn't heard before. I started listening more and more to that. This is around '88 or '89, I guess. During the years to follow, I had periods where I listened more to this or that, but it was always punk rock. A lot of my friends were just into

ally get to release what we record, so that's a big factor.

Todd: Were there times when you think you were about to give up on it and put it on the back shelf for a bit?

Kalle: There was a point about two years ago when I moved to Stockholm and the other guys were down here. We didn't really have anything planned for the band. We didn't say we quit or anything, but I guess it was like six months where we didn't rehearse a single time and we didn't know when we were going to do it next time. Then some stuff happened after that, but if it hadn't, I'm not sure we would have united like we are now. Now, I'm totally into it. It's my main priority. I have a degree and everything, but I haven't been looking for a job so much because I want to pursue this and see how far we can take this.

Todd: What did you get your degree in?

Kalle: Graphic arts. Yeah, making originals for prints and graphic design and all that stuff.

Todd: What's been your most rewarding job that you've had?

Kalle: I've only had crappy jobs. The best job

I had was when I worked on graphic design for six months in Oskarshamn, but I quit my job because I wanted to move to Stockholm. Back then, I felt like I couldn't stay here, I just had to get out. After that, I've been working at factories by the hour—not steady employment—just cleaning up the paint boxes and moving furniture. I want to just be able to go away whenever I feel like it.

Todd: What do your parents do? Are they pretty supportive of your decisions?

Kalle: They think it's really cool that something's actually happening with this, now that we are going to Japan. They're really excited. My dad's retired and my mom's a schoolteacher for small kids, seven- to ten-year-olds.

Todd: What do you consider to be your biggest accomplishment in life so far that you personally have done?

Kalle: I would have to say that it's with the band, with the music that we've recorded. I may sound cheesy, but it's going to be there, once it's put out on a record that's sold all over the world and people enjoy it. That's what I'm mostly proud of because we've made a mark in some way. We recorded it and it wasn't only us who are happy with it. People are enjoying it and I want us record more stuff like that.

Todd: There's someone in the Swedish parliament that has your exact same name and he looks to be relatively the same age as you. Has that caused any confusion at all?

Kalle: I've seen it in the news sometimes, but he's not one of the more public figures who you see all the time, so no, I haven't been confused with him.

Todd: Why is hard to be an optimist today? What are the main factors of why you say that?

Kalle: I wrote the song "Warning," when the US invaded Iraq. You know, people make efforts to make the world a better place, but when it all comes down to it, when the big boys want to play, you can't really do anything about it. I mean the UN said, "No, we won't approve

of an invasion unless there's more evidence," but that didn't matter. And what could anyone do? No one can touch those idiots up there. It just keeps getting worse, and it's obvious that they're fucking us all. Everybody knows it and you can't do anything about it. That's how I felt at that point. I want to believe that we can do better things, but, at times, I doubt it.

Todd: Do you think that you remain partially an optimist?

Kalle: There are moments when you're happy, but it's hard. You have to work on it. It would be easy to just hide in Oskarshamn, just don't watch TV so I don't know about all this stuff.

Todd: You take quite a few stands against television in your songs, maybe two or three references. Do you have any friends you grew up with who have become complacent because of television? Or not even television, but the television mentality of getting fed information and taking it at face value, trying to muddle through the day?

Kalle: Not in that way, but I think people are wasting so much time, sitting and watching crap so many hours a day. If they had been doing something creative, they could have done a lot of good stuff. I find myself doing that, too, when you come home tired and you flip the TV on. Then an hour has passed, like, what have I just watched? All evening, they show reality shows and degrading dating shows and stuff that if it had been aired only five years ago, people would not have stood for it.

Todd: Are there a lot of American television shows in Sweden?

Kalle: Yeah, first they show the American version, *Extreme Makeover* or *The Bachelor* or whatever, and then they try to make a Swedish copy the next season. After the original season was bad from the beginning, the Swedish ver-

sion is even worse, where not even people who liked the first show would like the second. It's embarrassing.

Todd: To counter bad TV a little bit, can you give me a piece of Swedish history that average Americans might find astonishing or may not know?

Kalle: Well, I can't think of anything really. I wish I had some great story involving Vikings. A lot of American people seem to be really interested in them, like they think they're really cool. When I was over there, people would always talk about Vikings when they heard I was from Sweden.

Todd: There's something that the Swedish government does that the American government doesn't, and that's play bands on a national radio station. From what I gathered, you guys got played on it. How does that entire situation get set up? Is it any independent record that's released, or do they randomly pick a song off the record? How does the Swedish government know that Smalltown has released a song?

Kalle: It's on the public service channel and there are quite a lot of programs that are devoted to demos and more non-commercial types of music. They have their fingers out and they know quite a lot of new stuff that's coming out. Obviously, people are sending stuff in as well. That's what I did with our records since they're not distributed in chain stores or anything. That's stuff that we sent in and they thought it was good and they played it on various rock and roll shows.

Todd: What kind of response did you get from

Before ninth grade, it
was all a big mystery.
I had no idea that a
song was just two
chords or three.



it? Did people call in and say, "Hey, I really liked that song"?"

Kalle: Not that I know of. People who I know have called me and said, "Hey, I heard you on the radio yesterday." It hasn't led to a bigger interest.

Todd: You're a Swedish band from a small town. How did you get in touch with a label from Toronto (Deranged) and a label from Japan (Snuffy Smile)?

Kalle: Gordon from Deranged Records read the reviews and also the short interview that we did with *Maximum Rock'n'roll*. I think he was really into the Stiff Little Fingers and he had really been looking for melodic stuff to release on his label for a long time, as I understood it, but he hadn't come across anything. I sent him a package after he asked me for some stuff—some demo recordings and the two 7"s that we had—and he like it and wanted to release it. The label from Japan, he got a 7" from me a long time ago, before Deranged got in touch with me. When we got back from our little Finland tour this spring, I got an email asking if we wanted to do the split with Practice. Then he asked us if we wanted to come to Japan and we're really grateful.

Todd: When was the last time you were in an accident and you fell so hard that you had to check and see if you were still breathing (a song reference)?

Kalle: That's a metaphor. There've been times when there's been a girl involved and you feel

like you've hit the ground: depression. There have been moments when I just said, "I'm giving up, I can't do this anymore." When I think back on it now, I think, why did I pay so much attention that and how could I take that so hard? But at the time it was like, I'm not gonna pull this one off. A lot of the songs tend to be really personal, about a lot of the same things.

Todd: Do you find it cathartic to sing about it, like it feels good to sing these songs and get them out of your system?

Kalle: Yeah, definitely. When you've written it, it feels like, now I've said what I think. A lot of times, the person who it's directed to won't even get that it's directed towards them, but it feels good, like you get the last word. At some points, I felt like it was closure and I don't have to think about that anymore. A lot of times, though, I still can't get it out of my system as much as I wanted to. You're probably one of the only people to read the lyrics that carefully. Lyrics are pretty hard to do. They're the last thing I do. When I sit down to do them, I won't let go until I'm pleased with it. I'm not the kind of guy with notebooks full of lyrics and I have to write some music to go with them.

Todd: What do you think is the next step for you guys musically? It's mid-paced and very melodic in the best sense, and like what you were talking about with the Clash and Ebba Grön, it seems like there's an evolution already going on. What do you foresee in the near future

for you guys?

Kalle: If you listen to the first 7" and compare that to the new record, I think the new stuff is more nuanced. The faster songs are a little bit faster and the slower ones are a little bit slower. I'd like to take it more in that direction, like a bigger spectrum, and try to work more on arrangements. There are only three guys in the band and I'm the only guitarist, and I'm a crappy guitarist, too, so we can't really work on that. We have to make as much out of the bass lines and harmonies as we can since we're only three. I wish I was the Descendents' guy on guitar so I could do something else. Also, before we felt that our recordings had to represent how we sound live. You know, only one guitar track and so on. We've started to see that a little differently now, I guess. I mean, the records are gonna be around much longer than we are, so why not experiment in the studio a little, add more sides to it? On this album our drummer fooled around with a piano. Next time we might invite friends to play accordion, harmonica or whatever. We'll see what happens.

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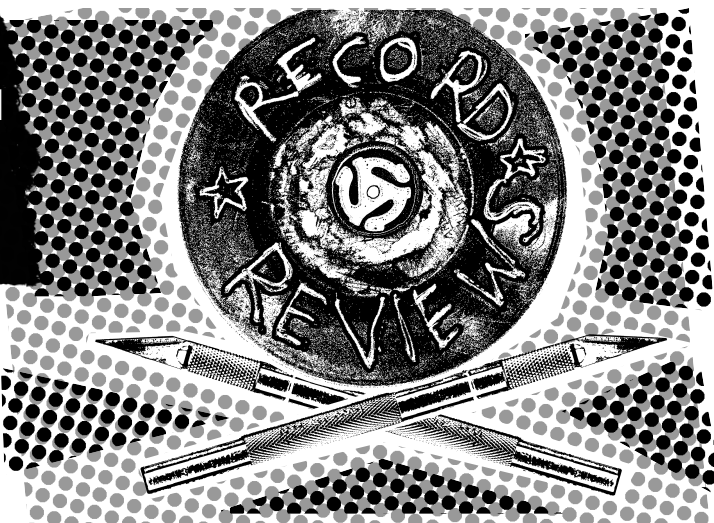
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3 KISSES: Wings: CD-R

Have you ever gone to a club on a Monday night to go see a bunch of bands you have never heard of just because you wanted to get out of the house? Have you ever been to a showcase setting where bands are trying to get signed? This band would have been at every one of those shows, including the battle of the bands. You know things are bad when a band uses the same notes of "Louie Louie" and "Wild Thing" and put new lyrics over it. The cute female vocals do not do anything to make this tolerable. —Donofthead (Stolen Kisses)

4 FT. FINGERS:

A Cause for Concern: CD

Do bro's still listen to underground music? If so, these guys are totally stoked! They look like Papa Roach but their tight surf punk synchronization and harmonized vocals make them appear talented and less meatheaded. In the end, they are just another No Use for a Name and the kids watching *TRL* would probably eat this shit up (but I can't because I don't like to eat shit). At least they aren't singing about girls or Jesus. —Gabe Rock (Go Kart)

7 SECONDS: Take It Back, Take It On, Take It Over!: CD

Man! When I was in high school, I could not get away from this band. Everybody that I hung out with played *The Crew* and *Walk Together, Rock Together*. It was annoying in the way the stoners played Van Halen and Led Zeppelin all the time. The first time I saw this Reno band was when they played their first LA gig. I remember it being at some shitty old theater in a bad part of town. I remember them being good enough that I would listen to my brother's copy of the *Skins, Brains & Guts 7"*. I would also go see them many a time when they came in town after that. But when they got all rock at the same time Youth Brigade became the Brigade, I was turned off. A few years back I got a copy of the *Good to Go* CD and they went back to their old stylings. This CD continues on with their early traditions and if you are a fan of their early material, this should not disappoint. Kevin Seconds leaves guitars duties to another but does play with original members Steve Youth and Troy Mowat. Before you go write them off as another old band reforming to relive their pasts, give this a listen. I was hesitant on their previous and the

It doesn't matter how anyone tries to label these guys, what matters is that they continue on in their own bold way, kicking in doors and peeing on people's lunches.

-Aphid Peewit

current release but I was surprised each time how much I liked their current music. —Donofthead (Sideonedummy)

7 SECONDS: Take It Back, Take It On, Take It Over: CD

If you were privy to my record collection, you would notice a rather large gap in the 7 Seconds section, which starts with *Skins, Brains, & Guts*, moves through *Walk Together* and then wholly bypasses their late '80s and '90s output until their triumphant return to form on *Good to Go*. Simple reason: their output during that void set a staggeringly wretched standard for faux-U2 suckdom that is matched only by Bad Religion's mid-'80s dreams of achieving ELP/prog rock demi-god status and TSOL's drug-added attempts at being glam rock heroes. So traumatized was I by that period in 7 Seconds' lifespan that I remember physically wincing when I pressed play the first time I put *Good to Go* on the player, but my fears were quickly allayed when the first track came blasting forth and I realized that they had returned to form. This doesn't mean that I'm not open to experimentation or "growth," but if you're gonna push the parameters a bit, just make sure it's still got some bite to it, y'know? Anyway, I digress. This, their latest, is a continuation of their last, in that the songs remain as lightning quick as in the days of yore and tempered with just the right amount of pop. Given the current political state in this country, surprisingly few songs here address national/world issues, but they do shine a much-needed light on "scene" politics, both praising and encouraging the younger crop of kids and offering a justifiably harsh criticism of the Hot Topic crowd, which makes me wonder, though, if this means we won't be seeing 7 Seconds shirts on sale there at thirty bucks a pop. I'm all for retrenching the scene in the underground and recaptur-

ing that sense of mystery and "danger" it needs so desperately to survive, but if you're gonna do that, then ALL ties with the corporate punk overground need to be severed, meaning no more Hot Topic, no more records distributed by Columbia, no more Sideonedummy, no more Warped Tour, no more summer festivals sponsored by Vans and the like whatsoever. Take it on, take it back, take it over—I'm right there with you, Kev, if you and the remainder of our contemporaries that are still out there slugging it out in the punk rock world truly are sincere about excising punk/hardcore from the corporate teat it has latched itself onto. I gotta say, I've heard grumbings from more than one source that the last two 7 Seconds albums were nothing but lip service intended to retain their punk cred and return to the safety of former glory when that big stab at rockstardom didn't pan out like it should've, but after years of watching people move on to "the real world," I'm still strangely optimistic enough to give you the benefit of the doubt and believe that the sincerity you once wore on your sleeve is still there, bro. But again, I digress. Even if the songs sound a little formulaic at times, it's still next to impossible to keep one's fist from shooting straight into the air and letting fly the requisite "whoahs" during damn near every chorus. In short, I remain a fan. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sideonedummy)

A FRAMES: Complication b/w Frankenstein: 7"

People tend to throw around Gang of Four comparisons when talking about this band, but this record is too immediately satisfying to be lumped in with any icy, quasi-disco British post-punk. Call me crazy, but it reminds me a lot of the Mummies, albeit with really skewed guitar lines. I mean, if you played this at a party, it would never be confused with the kings of Budget Rock, but the approach is similar in the

way they pound the crap out of their instruments and the way they, you know, rock. It's addictive stuff; I usually let each song play two or three times before I flip the record over. And I heard that these guys have now signed to Sub Pop, which hopefully means that their upcoming records will be easier to find than their previous ones. —Josh (S-S)

ACTION SWINGERS: Enough Already!: CD

Unless I miss my guess, the Action Swingers' *Decimation Blvd.* album was kind of the *Land Speed Record* of the AmRep set—wait, no, that's not right, *Land Speed Record* was the *Land Speed Record* of the AmRep set—well, okay, maybe it was the *Blood, Guts & Pussy* or the *Get Action* of the AmRep set. Wait, no, that can't be right, either. It must've been the *Blood Guts & Pussy* of the AmRep set but the *Land Speed Record* of the Sub Pop set, because *Blood Guts & Pussy* was ON Sub Pop, so *Blood Guts & Pussy* has to be its own *Blood Guts & Pussy* for its own label, I mean, sheesh, a = a, how hard is that? But anyway, yeah, *Decimation Blvd.* was the *Blood Guts & Pussy* of the AmRep set, and the *Land Speed Record* of the Sub Pop set, unless, as I said, I miss my guess (and why wouldn't I? What do I know from AmRep and Sub Pop and Sub Rep and AmPop and all like that?), but it also had significant currency in the Real World, because, after all, didn't the Loudmouths cover "You'd Better Keep Your Big Mouth Shut?" Well, yes, I believe they did, so HA! That proves my original point! Actually, wait... no... no it doesn't. Well, be that as it may, the Action Swingers sounded like they were made up of chewed up parts of Zeke, Dick Army (the fact that the Action Swingers were around long before Dick Army [likely before Zeke too] surely compounds the ongoing inanity of my analysis), the Ramones and Black Flag, all held together by black licorice moistened with that new, particularly evil looking strain of Mountain Dew™. Recorded at their final show in 1998, this artifact communicates the last dozen violent spurts of their existence so effectively that, when the band finally blows the final wad of the black cum of their tortured existence listenerward, I feel as though I am one of those beguiled villagers from *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*, save that my engorgement is black, not green, in color. Ned Hayden strikes me as the kind of guy whom, had he a say in his means of execution, would choose "having a telephone receiver jammed down my throat with a broomstick" just so he could get on *Faces of Death*. '90s Nostalgia Nights are actually starting to sound like a good time to me. *I'm Sick!* BEST SONG: "You'd Better Keep Your Big Mouth Shut," but it's not on here, so I'll say "Waiting For My Chance." BEST SONG TITLE: "How Do You Work This Thing" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I talked to Ned Hayden on the phone once, at my friend's record store. —Rev. Nørb (Reptilian)

AFT: Self-titled: CD

Believe me, I am still a fan of this band. I have enjoyed their music for years and I like the current major label release. So I find it weird that this release is even in my hands. This is supposed to be a retrospective of the band while on the Nitro label. I know

the label invested a lot of money trying to promote the band before they departed. But to release songs that are still in print and readily available? Most of the tracks that are termed rare are not even that rare. Yeah, they are B-sides and bonus tracks. Woopie. Those releases were pressed in the thousands. Rare is what people pay for: the *Dork 7* or the other three 7"s and splits that were released before the Nitro era. In my mind, I believe they are trying to take advantage of the band's new release and to recoup money by bringing on more interest on their available back catalog. A special note from the bands website: *To any of our fans who may have bought Nitro Records' AFI anthology, we would like you to know that the decision to create this compilation was made solely by Nitro Records. While we are extremely proud of our body of work over the years, we would like you to know it was not the band's decision to compile, create or promote a "retrospective" at this point in our career. If you should enjoy it or hear something you've been unable to find elsewhere then great, but please understand it was conceived and sold without our input. We are much more focused on creating our new record for our fans and seeing you all on tour next year. If you are a fan of this band, you will already have these songs. If you are now just discovering them, go buy the actual records. This is a waste of money.* —Donofthedeath (Nitro)

AIR CONDITIONING: Weakness: CD

Three audio tracks with a total time of 40:12. I call them audio tracks because these forty minutes and twelve seconds largely consist of noise—screaming, blistering, howling, raw noise, punctuated by periodic vocalizations which are largely unintelligible. We are not, for example, talking about noise as Lou Reed constructed it on *Metal Machine Music*—we're talking about chaotic shit that is as likely to make your ears bleed as it is to sound like something resembling a song. —Puckett (Level Plane)

AIR CONDITIONING: Weakness: CD

Three guys raise one seriously cranked racket, one barely classifiable as music. Three tracks run forty minutes and coat a thin skeleton of rhythm with gallons and gallons of guitar noise, bass noise and a few crunchy samples. Maybe some vocals, but you're not gonna get the words; you're just gonna get the ear-borne sickness which is its own cure. —Cuss Baxter (Level Plane)

ALL AMERICAN WEREWOLVES: Hate Rock USA: CD

In keeping the monster theme so prevalent here, I'd say if this were a B monster movie it would be billed as "The Ramones Meet Chuck Berry." And I'm talking here about Chuck Berry the musician and not Chuck Berry the toilet bowl cinematographer, though the latter might make for a more interesting monster movie. Anyways, this is bouncy, good-time stuff, roughly similar to a band like the Groovie Ghoulies. And though it might pretend that it's "hate rock," it's so damn affable it's hard not to like it at least a little bit. —Aphid Peewit (Eugene)

ALL OR NOTHING H.C.: What Doesn't Kill You...: CD

Just in case you didn't pick up what

"h.c." stood for at the end of this band name—this is a hardcore band. Fronted by lead singer Renae Byrant, this band makes Tsunami Bomb look like a bunch of pansies. Some of the feel-good topics brought up here include: dysfunctional families, oppression, fear, and violence. Not something to play at your next office party, but the band is competent and seems to be schooled in the classics. I can hear some Verbal Assault, some Gorilla Biscuits, even some Suicidal Tendencies (first album only, please). If you're mad at the world and think the man is bringing you down, this may be the record for you. —Sean Koepenick (Rodent Popsicle)

ALL PARALLELS: Formulate a Tragedy: CD

Sweet fucking Christ. I may have finally found something as horrifically bad as Into Another. There's a hint of bad funk, a slew of boring rock riffs (throw the horns, motherfuckers!), and lyrics about working to make girls theirs, along with vaguely sexist songs about how to get money, girls, and drinking, and one track about homelessness which is so heavy-handed that the band should really consider giving up music and going into boxing, sooner rather than later. —Puckett (On The Rise)

ALL PARALLELS: Formulate a Tragedy: CD

You can smell it a mile away when a band has their hearts in the wrong place. This CD reeks of *I want to make it!* This band sounds like many other rock bands that you would catch on MTV or Fuse (MuchMusic for you Canadians). When this band is in pop mode, they sound way too much like Weezer. Like we need another Weezer clone band. The rock stuff is like Nickelback or Puddle of Mudd or any one of those boring rock bands. Generic. And they have that *Oh god, not another band that sounds like* (enter band name here). More power to these guys. I will make this go away and not have to listen to this again. In the trash you go. —Donofthedeath (On the Rise)

ALL SYSTEMS FAIL: Self-titled: 7"

Crusty hardcore from SLC, with big, crunchy guitars, dual vocals and one song sung in Spanish. Not too shabby. —Jimmy Alvarado (Loderbrock)

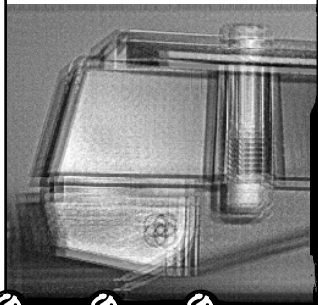
ALUMINUM KNOT EYE: Trunk Lurker: LP

What can make supreme weirdness so catchy? The process of discovery and invention is so vague and convoluted, but when you hear something from left field, it's either like being whacked by Thomas Edison's wet brain and a huge light goes on over your head or it's easy to dismiss it as broken ear junk (or just plain shit). For as cacophonous, screeled, and scraped-into-a-mound-then-blasted-apart as AKE are, there's a soft bubblegum-ness that keeps it all sticking together. Somehow. The beauty of it, what I hear may be completely different for the next listener. Christ, they've got stuff reminiscent of the Cramps to Roky Erickson to the Lost Sounds to The Pagans to The Clone Defects to The Scientists to Hasil Adkins to Masters of the Obvious to spaghetti western soundtracks to good, old fashioned gas huffing. Mix 'em up in a big, jagged ball and imagine an accident with them getting splattered on a windshield and the little bits of glass flying everywhere. Definitely some-

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THESE ARE THE TOP 7"s SINCE THE LAST MAG.



Underground Medicine Mailorder, Connecticut

1. Carbonas, *Frothing at the Mouth* (Master)
2. Tyrades, *Incarcerated* (Die Slaughterhaus)
3. A-Frames, *Complications* (S-S)
4. Frantic, *Attaque* (Die Slaughterhaus)
5. Four Slicks, *Betty Lou* (Born Bad)
6. Feelers, *Fuhrer's New Miniskirt* (Contaminated)
7. Cactus, *Normale* (Hate)
8. River City Tan Lines, *Black Knights* (Misprint)
9. Kill-A-Watts, *New Things* (Goodbye Boozy)
10. Die Rotzz, *Tugboat* (Die Slaughterhaus)

Speedway Randy,
Just a Guy, Not a Distro

1. Blank Its, *Johnny's Tongue* (Band Its)
2. Fatals, *Stereo-No-Phonic* (PTrash)
3. Lost Sounds, *No One Killer* (Holy Cobra Society)
4. Lost Sounds, *Demos & Outtakes Vol. 2 Box Set* (Rockin' Bones)
5. Sweet JAP, *I'm Only Moonlight* (Dirtnap)
6. Tyrades, *I Am Homicide* (Shit Sandwich)
7. Tyrades, *Incarcerated* (Die Slaughterhaus)
8. Absinthe, *Gag Reflex* (King of the Monsters)
9. Panty Raid, *The Secret's Out* (Raw Sugar)
10. Marked Men, *I Can't Be Good* (Mortville)

Disgruntled Mailorder, California

1. Dirtbombs, *Merit* (Kapow)
2. Dirtbombs, *Crash Down Day* (Corduroy)
3. Geisha Girls, *Buckingham* (Backflip)
4. Supersuckers/Hangmen, split (Bootleg Booze)
5. BellRays, *Lion's Den* (Vital Gesture)
6. Grudges, *Be Alive* (Delta Pop)
7. Gun Club, *Secret Fires* (Sympathy for the Record Industry)
8. Germs, *Forming - Version 2* (Alive)
9. Real Losers, *Don't Leave Me Now* (Bancroft)
10. Hollow Points, *Charcoal Tears* (Disaster)

thing challenging yet instantly listenable. Here's to rural Wisconsin and its frozen tundras of inspiration. —Todd (Deadbeat)

**AMERICAN SUICIDE:
Self-titled: CDEPR**

I'm reading though this band's one sheet and I notice that this release was produced by Jim Pearlman of Blue Oyster Cult and The Clash fame. That's fucking sweet. Oh, wait—that was Sandy Pearlman! Well, maybe it's his cousin or something. Anyway, this crisp sounding demo starts off with "Coming Back" and I think they're pouring an icy cold one into a glass at the beginning of the song to get thing revved up. Sounds like the best drinking song since "Drinking and Driving." The band keeps the amps cranked for the whole deal and this sounds really good at high volume. They tend to remind me of a twisted concoction of Screem and Junkyard. All in all, probably the hottest rock to come out of Pensacola since the last NASCAR crash. But at four songs, this is a quick fix. I hope more is on the way. —Sean Koepenick (Self-released)

**ANGRY FOR LIFE:
Sharks and Roaches: CD**

If this spew of mediocre pop punk (think about early Bad Religion or early Screeching Weasel, only less musically competent and interesting), generic lyrics about individuality and, like, resistance and shit, bro, had come out twenty-five years ago, someone might have cared then. As it is, I don't because this says nothing to me about my life or what I face. Hell, I doubt it says anything meaningful to someone

in high school who really thinks that Yellowcard's lyrics are profound. —Puckett (Vinehell)

**ARKHAM: The Freak
Power Candidate: CD**

Long intros and intricate or repetitive guitar solos might drag out the songs and confuse you but it's refreshing in a toothpaste kind of way. The progression in the music leads to some amazing tracks if you dig into the whole Steve Albini thing. A lot of the songs are hit or miss but I'm still giving it a gold star. —Gabe Rock (Volcom)

**ARMEDALITE RIFLES:
Self-titled: 7"**

Primitively delivered punk rock that vaguely reminds me of the old Minneapolis band Boy Elroy. Can't say it made me all warm and fuzzy inside, but their hearts are clearly in the right place and sometimes, just sometimes, that can be enough to put them into the "cool" column. —Jimmy Alvarado (Wrinky Dink)

**ASSAILANT, THE:
Self-titled: CDEP**

Assumptions can take a turn for the worst or give an unexpected surprise. Cover artwork does not always reveal what type of music will be represented. I was surprised here. Sometimes it's hard to describe a band. Every person has a different list of influences. For me to describe this, I would list Dillinger Escape Plan, Damad, Discordance Axis for bands that start with "D." For the other bands, I would guess some Napalm Death and maybe some Locust. But that could be all wrong when someone else listens. Eight songs in a little over eight min-

utes of pure pain. Metallic riffs over pounding drums create a chaotic landscape. When the band delves into grindcore blast beats, you feel like you are going to die from a thousand bee stings from the rapid attack. No artificial sweetener to make things happy. Anger and despair is what is being served. —Donofthedeat (Black Matter)

**ATWAR/CELL BLOCK 5:
Live Cheap Split: CD**

The first of this split is AtWar, which is one of the guys from English Dogs. And if that isn't enough to make you buy the album, then you should know the guy from Social Unrest is in Cell Block 5. If you don't know who either of those bands are, you probably don't give a flying fuck about this album. AtWar reminds me of the kind of punk rock that is basically heavy metal but since they have mohawks and English accents you get to pogo unless you are stupid and confused, plus the drumbeat for almost every song is the same (you know the one) except when the chorus busts out and they're all like, "Shoot your own head off!" Cell Block 5 is more of the, "Yeah, we're fucking punk, why aren't you dancing with your elbows flailing around and hurting people yet?" variety. Did I mention they are fast? The album is actually pretty good for a live album and the bands talk shit about other bands and get chicks on stage—all the shit you should expect for a live album. —Gabe Rock (Malt Soda)

**BABYLAND:
The Finger: CD**

Truth be told, I was always kinda leery of a lot of the music releases Flipside put out. Not that it was all bad, mind

you, but there were enough clunkers in that catalog to warrant more than a few puzzled looks and scratched noggins. One needs look no further than the Motor Morons EP for proof. Babyland, however, were always a no-brainer to me. Their caustic "two men and a computer" techno-punk assault (not to be confused with "digital hardcore," a German one-trick pony that faded faster than Paul Simon's acting career), which successfully maintained a balance of human aggro and mechanical remoteness, always managed to keep me interested. More importantly, they always made an interesting racket and that's usually most important when you really get down to it. Outside of those Flipside releases, however, I never really heard much else from 'em, partially because I couldn't find anything else for a while there, and partially because I had heard they had traded in the noise for dance floor accessibility. Seeing this in the music piles was a nice surprise. While I'm pleased to say that they have not, in fact, wimped out, there is definitely more of a sense of "musicality" to the tunes on here, the result being a sort of "death rocked new wave via Casio keyboard" hybrid, with homeboy still belting them vocals out, that stands up to any of their previous releases. Nice to see that, in their case, "progression" and "maturation" do not equal overt sucking. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.mattressrecords.com)

**BAFABEGIYA/
ARABELLA: Split: 7"**

Bafabegiya: A hardcore band that ain't particularly fast, but they manage to find a groove and exploit it for what

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it's worth. Arabella: An arty hardcore contrast to the flip, not as immediately accessible, but not without its own charms, either. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.spacemrentreno.com)

BAGS: *Survive: 7"*

There were a handful of records I chanced upon when I was a kid, just getting into punk rock, that really struck a chord with me. Looking back, I was incredibly lucky with the records that just happened to be in the used bin of an independent record store in Vegas. Looking back, I was exposed to a tremendously mixed bag of punk and hardcore—from different scenes and different eras—stuff like the Necros, JFA, and the Bags, all in one trip. Gladly, listening to this 7" again years later (see the Alice interview in this issue as to why) neither song sounds dated. Commanding, snarling, and desperate female vocals, expert but not "pro" musicianship, an unquestionable angst and comet-like burning make it as great as ever. Word is that this reissue is directly from the original 1978 Dangerhouse plates. Sounds awesome. An irreplaceable slice LA punk rock that's neck and neck with the best that was ever released. —Todd (Artifix)

BATTLESHIP: *Self-titled: 12" EP*

This is a pretty noisy record, but something underneath the noise sounded kinda familiar. I listened and listened, and then it hit me: Fugazi. I doubt that anyone involved with this record is going to take that as a compliment, but dude, they sound like early Fugazi. Not in an artsy way like so many other bands that sound like Fugazi, but structurally, the two bands are somewhat

similar, the vocalist sounds a bit like Guy but with more force. And like I said, it's noisy, so they kinda reminded me of the Blacks (Tucson, not Sweden) at the same time. Did I mention that it sounds like Fugazi? I like Fugazi and I like this record. —Josh (Raw Deluxe)

BEAR CLAW: *Find the Sun: CD*

Dual bass and drums that often sounds like it doesn't even have a guitar and assumes a sort of angular approach that recalls the Jesus Lizard and Big Black. The singer kind of sounds like Dave Smalley, but I don't think that's relevant. —Cuss Baxter (Sickroom)

BEERZONE: *Punk Rock Since '97: CD*

This is solid, very British sounding street punk with a nasty neat streak. Don't get me wrong, it rocks—but it's just that everything sounds nicely pleated and neatly tucked in. Especially for a band calling itself "Beerzone." Maybe all these years of keeping their hairdos so neat and clean has gone to their heads. Sloppy things up a bit there boys and get back to me. —Aphid Peewit (Beer City)

BERZERK: *A.E.I.J.N.: 7"*

At first I thought this sounded like a tighter version of Sin 34, but that was only one song. The other songs on this 7" had more of a Nardcore sound mixed with some d-beat aggression. The female vocals are yelled without going guttural, which keeps things pinpointed in the right direction. Band wise, they are tight and write some fine tuneage. Since this is my introduction to this band, I need to see if there is

more. With this teaser, I'm sure that more is to be had. —Donofthead (Recess)

BLACKLIST BRIGADE/ TORTURE GARDEN: *Split: CD*

Blacklist: Despite the raw demo-quality of the sound, these kids have got some pretty good street punk, with just the slightest hint of *Inflammable*-era SLF, goin' on here. Torture Garden: Some pretty straightforward punk with a vocal delivery reminiscent of Jesus and Mary Chain. Good, but strange. —Jimmy Alvarado (No Front Teeth)

BLOODSTAINS: *Self-titled: 7"*
Bruising, meaty hardcore that swings a spiked 2x4 right at your soft and tenders and evokes some of the same heavy rage as bands like latter-day Exploited and Sweden's Disfear. Absolutely no new twists here, this one wins on simple drag-you-by-the-hair-down-the-stairs, ass-kicking execution alone. Me like. Me want more. —Aphid Peewit (FNS)

BLOTTO: *Bang Up Your Chair: 7"*

This is an uncharacteristically DIY-looking release from Snuffy Smile. The front and back covers are photocopied and glued onto an old Registrators seven-inch sleeve. It actually looks really cool. The four songs that come with this package, though, are the high quality that I've come to expect from Snuffy Smile. Imagine a Japanese version of the Replacements covering Clash songs, and you're in the ballpark. A lot of hooks and a lot of tempo changes. Folky parts and hardcore parts all wrapped around a tight

melody. To top it all off, one of the guitarist/singers shares a name with my favorite Japanese author: Murakami. Great stuff. —Sean (Snuffy Smile)

BONECRUSHER: *Fractured: 2X CD*

Bonecrusher has always been one of those bands I have mixed feelings about. They are one of the dismally few oi-influenced American bands that actually GET IT, and they do crank out a mean racket, but sometimes they fail to do it for me. I usually chalk it up to the mood I'm in at the time and await the next release and that's usually turned out to be a good way of approaching things. Collected here on two discs are all their early singles and the *Followers of a Brutal Calling* LP, plus an unreleased gem. I must be in the perfect mood for 'em, 'cause this is just making my day. If you're new to Bonecrusher or a fan wanting to catch up on their back catalog, look no further than this. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.knock-out.de)

BONNIE PARKERS, THE: *Sweaty Shirts & Bloody Fingers: CD*

Primal Roman thud punk/rock that works surprisingly well. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.benictomommy.com)

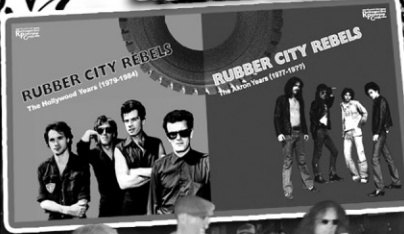
BOOKS ON TAPE: *The Business End: CD*

This looked cool when I picked it up. Wacky song titles like "I Will Straight Get You Arrested" and "What Satan Said to Me," and of course the album title is clever, too. Don't get me wrong—I like the electronic music the kids are digging today just as much as the next guy. I was hoping this would

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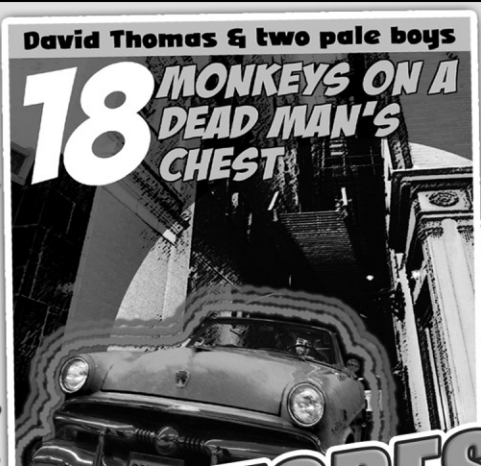
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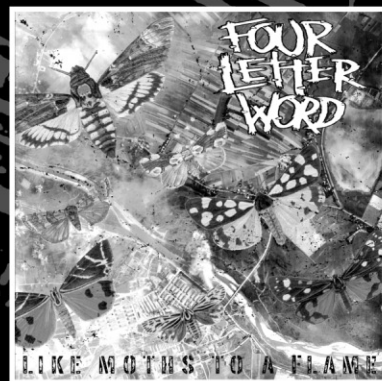
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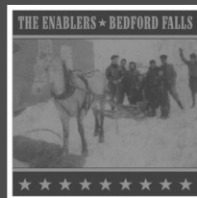
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be as good as Voyager One's latest record—or better. Sadly, I was dead wrong. The keyboards sound like they were mixed using a 1982 Commodore 64. The songs—there's just nothing here that grabs me. By my third go-round (and believe me, it took many Beck's to make it through the third go-round, my friends), I was hoping that the girl on the back cover would jump out with that pocketknife she had and stab me so I would be rendered unconscious. Unfortunately that did not happen either. —Sean Koepenick (Greyday Productions)

BRASSKNUCKLE BOYS:

American Bastard: LP

This album came out a few years back. It's solid American streetpunk, full of hooks and anthems and one Johnny Cash cover to boot ("Sunday Morning Coming Down," which is actually a Kris Kristofferson song, but Johnny Cash made it famous). I guess Haunted Town waited to see if the CD would catch on before they released it on vinyl, and I guess the CD did catch on because the LP has just recently been released. Some of the records are cool, swirly vinyl and some are just black. The music is good. I recommend it. I wish that these guys were releasing something new instead of just re-releasing the same songs in a different format, but what are you gonna do? —Sean (Haunted Town)

BRISTLE:

30 Blasts from the Past: CD

First saw these guys at an AA clubhouse in Tacoma in 1995 when we were on tour and secured an opening slot on said gig, which also featured the mighty DOA headlining. They were nice guys, politely enthusiastic of the jarocho/norteño/cumbia/hardcore punk we were peddling, and their set, comprised primarily of hardcore steeped in early to mid-'80s influence, was pretty smokin'. They even gave me a free 7-inch EP, which naturally solidified my fandom. The music on here is a collection of tracks (including the ones from the aforementioned EP) they recorded in the time surrounding that magic year when our bands crossed paths. The sound is reminiscent of old-timers like Jackshit and the like, meaning this is no-frills hardcore that pays its respects to its elders, yet they are still good enough at what they're doing to effectively inject some life into the old workhorse. A decade later and I gotta say, I still dig these guys a lot. —Jimmy Alvarado (Rodent Popsicle)

BUCK:

Former Child Actor: 7"

Lisa Marr has such a clear, powerful, and distinct voice. Buck was like the world's biggest Jolly Rancher—sweet, good tasting, and worth savoring. Satisfying pop with a real knack for power and force. The B-side, "Only Friends," is a mellow ditty about a relationship that really showcases how diverse Buck's range could be. The bad news is that these two tracks are the last Buck ever recorded. These two little gems are like finding two quarters in a pocket after laundry; shiny and you found 'em when you weren't expecting anything. —Todd (Geykido Comet)

BURNIN' THOUSANDS:

What's Destined Shall Be: CD

Pseudo-emo hardcore. As if it couldn't get worse. If the entire genre didn't seem so fucking contrived, I might be

inclined to be a little more fair. As it is, life isn't fair and sympathy falls somewhere between suck it up and tough shit. —Puckett (Zero Velocity)

CAREER SUICIDE:

Signals E.P.: 7"

Every so often some asswipe spouts off about punk being dead and I can see why someone might say that; I have myself stacks of "punk" CDs and records that are deserving of shallow graves along with my old G.I. Joes in my neighbor's backyard. But, of course, it isn't that raw, unbridled force called "punk" that's died. There's too much vital music out there still kicking down doors and peeing on people's lunches. What's dead is the clumsy label "punk" and the definitions that go with it. Thankfully, bands like Career Suicide are around to show how clownishly ill-fitting most of those labels are—and they do it in a way that is totally unpretentious and very convincing. And catchy too. I'm tempted to label them a hardcore band, but the more I listen to this record, the more I start to think I'm listening to one of those late '70s/early '80s West Coast bands that used to play at the Masque—like the Skulls or the Dickies. But then again they also sound to me a little bit like Minor Threat but with a few shovelfuls of snot hanging off them in all the right places. It doesn't matter how anyone tries to label these guys, what matters is that they continue on in their own bold way, kicking in doors and peeing on people's lunches. This is one band you simply can't go wrong with. —Aphid Peewit (Slasher)

CARRIE NATIONS:

Be Still: LP

As opposed to playing in an arena and hiding behind your pyrotechnics, I think it's a lot harder to play shows in people's living rooms or basements. It takes something out of the ordinary to be able to play just a few inches away from the audience, and it takes even more than that to make an avowed head-bobber like myself actually want to dance. Carrie Nations have that in spades. What do they sound like? Take a glob of sorta weird, sorta poppy indie rock, like a really good Guided by Voices song, and imagine that as your peanut butter. Smoosh it between two slices of gritty, dirty, sweat-and-beer-soaked DIY punk rock (let's say the Jack Palance Band on one side and the Grabass Charlestons on the other). Grease the whole affair with a knack for subtle yet deep-sinking hooks (like Archers of Loaf), throw it on the stove (which I guess represents the record player in this strained metaphor), and you've got yourself a fine, fine sandwich (or record, whatever). It's fun, it's enjoyable, and it makes the world a little bit more tolerable. I'm hoping that the next time I see this band play, they'll make it through more than five songs before the cops show up. —Josh (Bitter Like the Bean)

CHANNING COPE:

Sugar in Our Blood: CDEP

New age in a Jefferson Airplane kind of way. As boring as boring gets. —Donofthedeat (North Park)

CIRIL: 12 Tales: LP

I have to admit that I have seen this band a couple of times and I had a hard time paying attention. Their sets tended to be a little long for my liking. Not

knowing any of their material didn't help matters. A studio recording is a different matter entirely. The intro, I'm guessing, sung by the infamous Gitane Demone, is probably the best track to this man's ears. It reminded me of a death rock mixture of 45 Grave and the Super Heroines. The remainder of the tracks were more in the vein of early Rudimentary Peni, mixed with the entire *We Got Power* series of comps that were released on Mystic and a dash of the first Nihilistics LP. A major plus is that these songs are short and not overdrawn. I enjoyed it from the moment I dropped the needle until it ended. Another release that I received this time around that is a one-sided release with the added bonus of being on splattered purple vinyl. —Donofthedeat (Know)

CLASSICAL ASS: After

Lunch We Kill Tony: CD

Some really good, arty punk along the lines of Ex-Models or even Le Shok. Songs are short on pretentiousness, meaning they can make a mean racket without boring you to death in the process. —Jimmy Alvarado (Diaphragm)

CODESEVEN:

Dancing Echoes/

Dead Sounds: CD

Since I'm a betting man, I'll wager that this will be a huge hit at some point (it's as accessible and commercially viable as Coheed And Cambria), but honestly, *what the fuck is it?* I can't tell if it's a fucked-up hybrid of shoegazing and heavy metal or a cross-eyed emo variant. Shuffling drumbeats, electronic layers, synthesizer washes, breathy vocals—when you add it up, it sounds like an updated version of the Dream Academy, A Flock Of Seagulls or Tears For Fears (circa *Songs From the Big Chair*) with better gear. Not really being familiar with Codeseven's prior releases (although I could swear I've seen them live at some point), I won't comment on the oft-reported change from heavier music to this lightweight, airy new romantic rock—I will merely note that the best parts of this album remind me of records that I'd rather be listening to. —Puckett (Equal Vision)

CODETTA:

Fake the Golden Age: CD

They were arty, they were punky, they were noisy and, somewhere around the middle of the proceedings, they lost my interest. —Jimmy Alvarado (Surreal)

CONTRIBUTION:

What Is Your?: CD

They've got all these big names they're supposed to sound like listed on their press material, but all I'm hearing is weak music and painfully bad vocals. —Jimmy Alvarado (Goldenrod)

CONVERGE:

You Fail Me: CD

This disc starts out with the icy "First Light" that is kind of spooky. "Last Light" even reminds me of early Swiz for about half a verse and half a chorus. Then this record makes a left turn at the screamo exit and never gets off the off ramp. I can understand wanting to branch out, but why Epitaph thinks this is good I'll never know. If you like Cave In or Korn or if you're looking for something to make your ears bleed, pick this up. *You Fail Me* has absolutely no redeeming social value whatsoever. I'll be using this as a beer coaster

and putting the latest Motörhead back on the stereo to get some good metal on. —Sean Koepenick (Epitaph)

CRIME: San Francisco's

STILL Doomed: CD

If you've never heard of Crime, let alone own anything by 'em, then, quite frankly, you really need to reassess your involvement with this punk rock thang. Next thing you know, you're gonna be telling all yer friends about how cool and "punk" Hatebreed's latest snoozefest of a record is. Anyway, this is a reissue of a collection of studio recordings circa '76-'79 from one of SF's greatest bands, period. All the biggie hits are here—"Frustration," "Murder by Guitar," "San Francisco's Doomed," plus alternate takes of "Hotwire My Heart" and "Baby You're So Repulsive." The stuff here is a little more refined sounding than some other stuff I've heard with their name on it, but it is still clearly Crime, which means that some choice primitive rock-'n-roll can be heard here. Liner notes by the one and only Mike Lucas. —Jimmy Alvarado (Swami)

CRIMSON SWEET:

Boulevard b/w

Blood Transfusion &

Waste You, Taste You: 7"

...the review copy of this record came with a one-sheet containing a *Punk Planet* reviewer's quote claiming that one of their past records was "*one of the best rock records since Cheap Trick's Live at Budokan*," which is the kind of thing that makes me wonder if the party responsible had actually heard either one before writing the review. I dunno. A-side sounds like Kim Shattuck's little sister wearing Joan Jett's adopted Vietnamese war orphan daughter's pants, which is okay, i guess, except they're singing about a "boulevard," which almost always is a sure-fire major-label-wannabe gross-out indicator, in my book. "Blood Transfusion" is the kind of decadent plod that, more skillfully rendered, made me not like the first X album until i was too old to fight anymore, and "Waste You, Taste You" is pretty decent i suppose. The band's all right, i guess, but anybody popping a boner in their presence would be well advised to lay off the Viagra™-and-green-M&M™-puree enemas for a while. BEST SONG: "Waste You, Taste You" BEST SONG TITLE: "Waste You, Taste You" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: 7-inch 33 rpm records are the lamest permutation of the vinyl format ever invented. —Rev. Nørb (Shake It)

CROOK\$: City of Rats: 7"

The three songs on the first side exhibit at least a moderately praiseworthy ability to sonically transport the listener back to the not-quite-thrash-but-still-fast stuff of the first half of the '80s, including (for better or for worse) the little Black Sabbath-y intro and interludes in "12 oz. Curls" (which itself contains the surely immortal line "*All you can think is drive real quick, 'cause waiting at your house is a drunk horny chick*"), on accounta, around 1984 or so, when everyone was playing what we then called "hardcore" (which would now, after twenty years of gross misinformation and such, be called, pfft, "endoplasmic reticulum" or something), everybody was actually secretly sick of playing hard-core, but there was no **RAZORCAKE 77**

capacity to write/perform or even appreciate non-hardcore in The Scene, thus bands would satisfy their forbidden desires to play That Which Was Not Hardcore by writing these doofy metal or rock or electric folk or what-have-you intros to their songs. Didn't really work all that well, because about twenty-four months later they all flipped their lids and started wearing paisley shirts and playing acoustic guitars, but i spose the thought was there. On the b-side, "Stalker Bitch" will hardly make anyone forget "Bummer Bitch" by Freestone, and "2069 A Sexy Odyssey" is just stupid. I mean, the Space Amazons are raining out of the sky for "an orgy of interstellar love," but yet "they don't want the women, they only want the men"??? **BO-RIIHING!!!** If the Revolution doesn't include hot 'n' heavy Space Amazon/Earthgirl action, i ain't revolving. **BEST SONG:** "City of Rats" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "City of Rats" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Band's lyricist manages to first use "there" instead of "their" ("with *there* business suits and business shoes"), then, in the very next line, manages to actually use "their" correctly, *twice* ("with *their* power ties wrapped around *their* busy throats"), then, in the same song, manages to use "their" instead of "they're" ("Who are they? *Their* not like you."). Dude, i thought California made English its official language? —Rev. Norb (Noma Beach)

CROOKS:

City of Rats: 7"

Eureka punks who sound like the Randumbs without the bite or, as evidenced by the lyrics to "Stalker

Bitch," the wit. Purty yellow vinyl, though. —Jimmy Alvarado (Noma Beach)

DAVID THOMAS & TWO PALE BOYS: 18 Monkeys on a Dead Man's Chest: CD

...and, presumably, after said monkeys had been supplied with enough type-writers to randomly churn out the complete works of Shakespeare, they were given enough guitars, violins, trumpets, melodeons and musettes to emit this. Frankly, i still prefer Lancelot Link & The Evolution Revolution. **BEST SONG:** I'll say "New Orleans Fuzz," because i'm sure i at least listened all the way thru the first song. **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Nebraska Alcohol Abuse" **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** At 5:19, "Sad Eyed Lowlands" is exactly six minutes shorter than Bob Dylan's similarly horrific "Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands." —Rev. Norb (Smog Veil)

DEAD STOP: Done with You: CD

Okay, Gord at Deranged Records must have taken a wheel barrel full of fat pink little infants and offered it up to Choronzon as a sacrificial snack in exchange for favorable luck in stumbling across amazing band after amazing band. How else do you explain Fucked Up, Career Suicide and now Dead Stop—all on Deranged? My god, what other awesome, run-away cement truck bands do they have on their roster that I don't yet know about? Any other label would be lucky to have just one band of that caliber, let alone three. Like those other Deranged bands, Dead Stop is a hard-

core band that somehow manages to sound like they've re-invented hardcore, even if they really haven't. This is anything but generic, formulaic hardcore. This CD hits you like someone swinging the business end of a twenty-pound carp right into your mush. And it's all the cooler because it's been reported to me that Lino, the lead singer, is a truculent little elf who likes to wear fingerless gloves and a teeny-tiny leather jacket. Awesome band. —Aphid Peewit (Deranged)

DEADLINE/BRASSKNUCKLE BOYS: Can't Be Beaten: Split LP

Deadline: I'm becoming more and more convinced that I'm living in an alternate reality, that I just don't have ears that hear that same thing as the world at large. While people fawn and goo goo over the Distillers—who I think are "ehh, at best"—England's Deadline is virtually unknown in the States. While they're unmistakably street punk, three things save them from being merely stuck in the tight pants, skinny suspender herd. One, they're fronted by a strident, loud female who can both sing and scream—and there's just not enough of that. Secondly, the lyrics read less like meathead hooliganisms and bad behavior done by folks with short hair, and more like *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, a great book by Alan Sillitoe. Thirdly, and more important, the songs are catchy, varied, and reminiscent of a mix between early Vice Squad, Cock Sparrer, and, to add some modernity, early Dropkick Murphys. Brassknuckle Boys: Don't let the name fool you. They're coming from more the hard-working, hard-pushing

GC5 camp of intelligent working poor. Plus, there's a song titled "For You, Mom" about the misery of abandonment, so it's not all thick-skull, callus-brain stuff. The easiest way to sum the Brassknuckle Boys up is to imagine if Bruce Springsteen was raised on Sham 69, never had a hit single, and never met the E Street Band. Straight-ahead, whiskey and smoke-voiced, no bullshit rock'n'roll that's not trying to affect any poses. Excellent split. —Todd (Haunted Town)

DERIDE: Self-titled: LP

Flawless Japanese thrash in the rich, gushing vein of Assfort, Gauze, and Gism. Like sports photography, if you look at it in a millisecond and capture it in mid-leap, you can appreciate how precise, how finely tuned, how on-target, and how incredibly difficult a feat Deride's pulling off. The result's a nuclear bomb made out of thousands of meticulous motions, from the drums which oscillate between making a metronome jealous to how the Tasmanian Devil would attack, to the sharpened guitars that have more speeds than a blender, to the words spit out like bullets and unspooled like barbed wire, it's quintessential thrash. —Todd (Mad at the World)

DETENTION: Too Noisy: 7"

Ahh... another blast from the past resurrected. These tracks were originally released on BCT tape number ten (*I'm Buck Naked*) and later re-released on the CD titled *Hardcore Amerika*, which compiled tracks from BCT tape number three (*Eat Me*) and number ten. If you don't know about BCT (Borderless Countries Tapes or Bad

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Compilation Tapes), look it up, there is a discovery waiting to happen. Here are five live tracks from this New Jersey band that I think still stand the test of time. It's punk rock that is equally ready to fall apart but magically held together to create that sense of disturbing chaos. On top of that, they had a sense of humor. When so many are serious today and play by so many rules, this band had fun without being blatantly ignorant.
—Donofthedeath (Punk-111)

DIESTO: *Doomtown 7*: CD
Eight tracks of brutish Unsane/Hammerhead lowend mulch, three of which come before a surface defect on the CD, which defect causes uncorrectable skipping, which skipping causes uncontrollable throwing.
—Cuss Baxter (Elastic)

DISRESPECT: *Justice in a Bag*: 7"
They do this clever thing where the "Disrespect" on the sleeve looks just like Discharge's logo! But then instead of mimicking Discharge, they stomp around with a dual girlboy vocal streepunk thing that's not particularly interesting but doesn't suck (except some of the rhymes do). Contains members of Misery. —Cuss Baxter (Profane Existence)

DISSIMILARS, THE: *Jimmy's Room*: CD-R
Ever since Dave Hernandez decided to pull the plug on Scared of Chaka and start breaking the hearts of lonely indie rock girls everywhere (he's in another band that I'm not going to mention), there seems to have been a wave of heirs to their throne. The

Chop-Sakis, the Put-Downs, the Marked Men, the Knockout Pills, and now you can add the Dissimilars to that list as well. Mid-tempo, scuzzy, catchy garage rock from San Diego. It's as sloppy as it is endearing. Can't wait 'til this band releases some vinyl.
—Josh (Genetic Disorder)

DOLLYROTS, THE: *Eat My Heart Out*: CD
I saw The Dollyrots rock the house at the Anarchy Library back in April. At the time, they didn't have anything released. I figured I'd keep my eyes open for any future releases. When this showed up at Razorcake, I grabbed it, listened to it once when I got home, and my wife promptly stole it from me. It's okay. I like this album, but she loves it. It's on almost every time I get into her car. I think I'm going to go deaf from turning on my wife's car and hearing the Dollyrots pushing the speakers to the limit. *Eat My Heart Out* is well-done, female-fronted pop punk that has all the requisite traces of Nikki and the Corvettes and the Bobbyteens. "Kick Me to the Curb" gets the album rolling with the right mix of breaking hearts and shaking hips. Songs like "Jackie Chan" and "Wreckage" are tight balls of energy. I don't think anyone could listen to "Penny" all the way through without singing along to the chorus. And, finishing it all off is a cool cover of "Be My Baby." This is a solid debut album all the way through. I need to steal it back. —Sean (Panic Button)

DOLLYROTS, THE: *Eat My Heart Out*: CD
She (the vocalist, I missed her name) thinks she's JoAnn Rogan from

Thorazine or Kim Shattuck from The Muffs. She's not even the gutter crud stuck in their shoes. Closer to home, she thinks she's Ashlee Simpson, all the Donnass and Kelly Osbourne. Sickly sweet chubby-cheeked curly haired baby-girl goo-goo vocals over humdrum guitar chords. Plus, they (don't forget the band!) thank "roller skates, bubblegum and all the bands we luv." Grow up. You suck.
—Jessica T (Panic Button)

EDDIE HASKELLS, THE: *Dumpster Divin'*: CD
Not to be confused with that "Takin' the City by Storm" band from Wisconsin, this is respectably nonsuckass fourteenth-generation faux-Brit Bay Area thriftstore street punk which I originally thought could suck my dick because dumpster diving is such a menial topic to start one's album off with a song about (I mean, come ON, Song One Side One should always be about the grandly unquantifiable—Blitzkrieg Bopping, Cretin Hopping, Sonic Reducing—or, at bare minimum, about something so inarguably valuable—being with a Rock & Roll Girl, perhaps, or Seeing Her Standing There—as to render any debate regarding its appropriateness essentially academic); the band eventually persevered and won my heart via their knack for reassembling their disassembled punk clichés into new (yet completely non-innovative) forms which I happened to find pleasing. Well, that and it seemed like the singer actually wouldn't mind sucking my dick, so where's the fun in that? "Radio Video," "London Girls," and "Little Creep" all have that sort of "I dunno, it just came to me while I was

tapping my pencil against my shoe in math class" punk rock feel that nullifies their own inherent stupidity; "London Girls," almost certainly the stupidest of the lot, is likely the best (and reminds me of The Mess, which almost rhymes). That's just the way th' world works sometimes, m'man. One of the more aggravating aspects of the record is that the songs aren't particularly brief (none clock in at under 2:02)—and the lyrics are generally just two verses and a chorus of one or two lines (e.g., "Radio video," "I'm a little creep, are you, I'm a little creep born sniffing glue," and "Lust in the city, lust and danger in the city," repeated ad infinitum, are the choruses to three separate songs)—so I can only conclude that the band has got whatever the opposite of ADD would be (DAA?). My advice is to ditch the lame stabs at outright Rancidism ("Goin' Down"), but to keep trying to sing like BOTH Johnny AND Sid—it isn't every day I get a chance to experience such friggin' versatility. BEST SONG: "London Girls" BEST SONG TITLE: "Radio Video" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "London Girls" is not the Vibrators song of the same name, but there is a Vibrators flyer depicted on the CD booklet's interior. —Rev. Nørð (Super Speedway)

EGGROLL WILLIE: *Recruited to Hate*: CD
These guys have managed the dubious distinction of being the first hardcore band I've ever heard that made me wish I was listening to Jennifer Lopez instead. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.eggroll-willie.com)

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EMERGENCY: 1234: CD

Street punk from, I'm assuming, Vancouver, Canada. Well-produced and played by three guys who look like they live what they play. Kicking into gear with their oxblood Docs, they play a mixture of punk that reminded me of Abrasive Wheels meets Infa Riot. Nothing that offended me or bored me enough to take it out of the player. I will give it a "raise a pint" rating. —Donofthedeat (Step 1)

ENTRANCE:**Wandering Stranger: CD**

Soledad Brothers doing their best Jeffrey Lee Pierce imitation? Authentic country blues as performed by Tiny Tim? Peg Leg Howell time-traveled to today's Memphis? Something like that. Buddy, let's roll! —Cuss Baxter (Fat Possum)

ESKE: Big Trouble in Little Village: 7"

Something about the Southside of Chicago has resulted in a proliferation of cool ass bands over the years, and these guys are no exception. Mid-tempo hardcore, pissed off, driving and to the point, is the order of the day here. Good stuff. —Jimmy Alvarado (Southkore)

EVIL ARMY/ BURY THE LIVING: Split: 7"

Evil Army: Holyshitfuckgoddamn, were these guys ever swell. Short, hyped up hardcore that's over before the needle hits the wax. I'm mightily impressed with what little is here. Bury the Living: Five more tracks of fast, pissed off tunes from one of the best hardcore bands currently making the

rounds. I'd heard that they'd thrown in the towel, so I'm surprised to hear some new stuff from 'em. Bow your head in respect and play this often. —Jimmy Alvarado (Soul Is Cheap)

EXOSUS/ CLANCY 6: Split: 7"

Exosus: Accidentally had this on 33 rpm when it started, but, to be honest, they sound just as whacked and pissed off at either speed. Clancy 6: Loud/fast modern noisy hardcore (meaning "not metal") with strangled vocals. —Jimmy Alvarado (McCarthyism)

FACTORY INCIDENT, THE: Redtape: CD

Second release from this post-punk quintet from DC. The Factory Incident rolls the dice and comes up snake eyes on this stellar six-song mini-album. Intricate arrangements, dueling guitars and thoughtful lyrics help this one stand out in a crowd. "Argument" features slippery bass lines reminiscent of PiL's early output as the singer rails against the fray—"We have some conflict." Superb. "In the Vile" is also a killer track with some wild drum fills that truly compliment the song's flow. "4AM" offers up some cool guitar riffs that are sure to keep you up very late at night staring out at the stars. If you liked any aspects of The Sound, Echo & The Bunnymen, or Mission Of Burma, you will dig this band's groove brought up to date for the masses. Mixed by J Robbins, so you know that you need this CD like you need to breathe. —Sean Koeppenick (Post Fact)

FAX ARCANA/ THE DISEASE: Split: CD

Fax Arcana: Twangy guitars over a

post punk, gothic dirge. The Disease: Reminded me of Fugazi and screamo. Not the choice of beer I would drink if I were buying a pint. —Donofthedeat (Alone)

FIGHTING CHANCE: Party Lies: 7"

I have been accused of being an asshole many of times through the years. I am human. Some people should never be behind a microphone. At least find a brand of music that fits your vocal style (if you have any). Also, there are so many effects, harmonizers and plug-ins that can enhance a voice. The singer is so monotone and dry, and it is barely in key. It sounds almost laughable. Reminds me of those terrible white power bands with the third grade lyrics and the remedial song structures. It just does not have any oomph! On a lot of this record, the drummer sounds like he goes off time. The guitar sounds like it's being played out of a practice amp. The drums are also thin and the cymbals are the loudest sound in the mix. The bass is the only thing that sounds good. The only power I hear is the gravelly delivery of the singer. Man, that was bad. At least they have a nice cover and were pressed on red colored vinyl. —Donofthedeat (Insurgence)

FIGHTING CHANCE: Sacrifice and Struggle: CD

A self-proclaimed "working class street rock'n'roll" band from Baltimore, Maryland, Fighting Chance tap into early NYHC (Agnostic Front, Warzone, Cro-Mags) mixing in a good dose of metal (thick chords, quick, slinky leads) into the tough guy hardcore formula. They stick with the basic m.o. of the genre—rallying against the

man, never giving in, and uniting the punks and skins—and they do it well. Nothing to complain about here except maybe the shitty production values which rivals that of Underdog's first LP or Youth of Today's *We're Not in This Alone*. Another complaint (albeit a very small one) was the fact that my attention wasn't held for one complete listen. But that's because Fighting Chance had me jonesing to hear S.O.A. and one can never pass up an opportunity like that, now can they? —Greg Barbera (Insurgence)

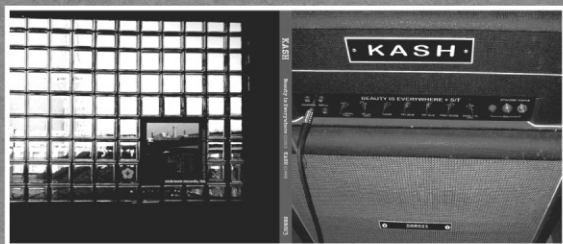
FIREBIRD BAND, THE: The City at Night: CD

Funny—I remember this band more as an angular, post-punk trio playing edgy music than a duo playing glitchy songs for coked-out electro-clash hipster fuckheads wrapped in blue cellophane. Since I didn't like Braid in the first motherfucking place, I will simply acknowledge that, while I appreciated The Firebird Band's first record, this one does exactly fuck all for me. —Puckett (Bifocal Media)

FKS/HE WHO CORRUPTS: Split: 7"

A split 7" from a couple of Illinois grindcore/crust/noise/punk bands. Christ, I didn't know bands like this even considered the 7" as a viable format. I got to say thank god they do 'cuz this slab o' wax hit me like the proverbial ton of bricks (back side of the head, never saw it coming) and twisted my zine reviewin' realm all upside down and inside and out. I reckon these lads have some Arab on Radar records in the house and know what words like HydraHead and Relapse mean in the grand scope of mindfuck rock'n'roll.

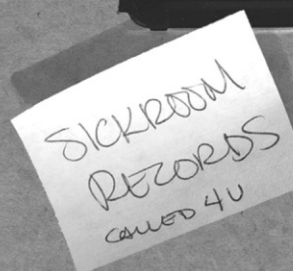
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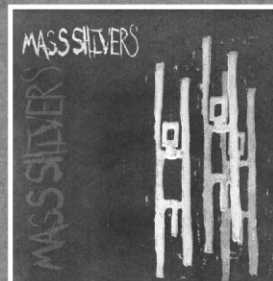
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I've got to wipe that drool off my lip now as I ponder the age-old question: Should I have played that at 33 rpms or 45 rpms? Like a Butthole Surfers record, it worked both ways. —Greg Barbera (Take It Back)

FLAPJACKS, THE: *Move to Mars*: CD

...i think i was pretty much at the forefront of the anti-rockabilly counter-movement around 1981/82, when rockabilly was briefly adapted as the “it” music *du jour* by a number of trend-surfing suburban American teens; further, the whole “Renaissance Faire” aspect of things (as Todd Kellner of Trick Knee records once astutely pointed out) makes rockabilly an understandably easy target for showers of disdain from people who believe themselves to be enmeshed in a more worthy musical movement. True dat, bro, but, when all is said and done, it must be admitted that, despite all the amputations, rockabilly is an inherently GOOD music. The beat, the rhythms, the syncopations, the basslines—this stuff is the birthright of all Americans; anything you, as an American, perceive amiss with Rockabilly In General can and should be considered the result of mere operator error. That said, i'd likely stick around sucking Schlitz™ 'til closing time with the Flapjacks were they to play at one of my local watering holes, but, given a good half-century of other rockabilly recordings clamoring for consumer attention, i am not so sure this one cracks the Top 1000 (if the *Move to Mars* theme was, in fact, an attempt to finish up the Holy Trinity started by *Rocket to Russia* and *Saucer to Saturn*, i withdraw that last allegation entirely). BEST SONG: “I Ain't the One”—“Deep Purple-a-billy” is really a term that should get more use. BEST SONG TITLE: “Move to Mars” FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I used to think that Bender's classic line in the second episode of Futurama™ was “*I'm starting my own amusement park—with flapjacks! And hookers!*”—not “*with blackjack! And hookers!*” Aw, forget the blackjack! —Rev. Nørb (Last Chance)

FLASHLIGHT ARCADE:
The Art of Blacking Out: CD
Youthful, dynamic emo, not that far away from Samiam (with just a few dashes of Thursday and Saves the Day thrown in for good measure). While this is well-done (i.e. the breakdowns all fall at the right time, the band starts and stops at the moments which this style dictates and the singer has the proper sound of yearning in his voice), well-produced (i.e. in a studio, not on a cassette recorder in a garage) and sounds as though it might go over swimmingly on the Warped Tour, this just isn't my thing. —Puckett (On The Rise)

FORCED REALITY: *Unreleased and Under the Boot*: CD

Musically, they run along post-Skrewdriver skinhead lines, and while lyrically they don't seem to share that band's political views on racial harmony, what they do have to say ain't exactly brimming with wit or originality, tending to run along the hackneyed lines of drinking, fighting and crime. —Jimmy Alvarado (Thorp)

FRAME: *The President's Neck Is Missing*: Cassette

The letter that came with it says, “I hope ya'll review tapes, it seems to be the new fad not to review tapes,” which is funny because didn't *MRR* quit reviewing tapes like fifteen years ago? And whether it's new or old, I wouldn't call not reviewing tapes a “fad”; call it a “necessity” maybe, on account of most tapes sound like ass, even if the songs themselves are good (which the four ones on here kind of are, in a slightly intricate but poppy punky way). It costs a dollar. —Cuss Baxter (Frame)

FRANTIC ATTAQUE: *Self-titled*: 7”

Trashy punk with hardcore frills here and there, kinda like the Gloryholes crossed with Street Trash, resulting in some rockin' tunes. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.dieslaughterhausrecords.com)

FREAK ACCIDENT, THE: *Self-titled*: CD

It's the kind of record you pick up and think, “Wow, this sucks.” Then you listen to it more 'cause you're like, “Fuck, I paid umpteen bucks for the piece of shit,” and it grows on you like a fungus that makes you itch until you know all the words. —Gabe Rock (Alternative Tentacles)

FREE VERSE: *Generator*: CD

This band has come a long way from their raw two-song CD I received back in '02. One song, “Mierda,” is re-recorded here. Back on that release, the band had a sound that reminded me of the early '80s death rock scene here in L.A. Super Heroines meets 45 Grave mixed with some Rozz Williams/Rikk Agnew period Christian Death. On this new release, these aggressive women from Seattle have honed their chops and recorded in a better studio. The opening track, “No Crime, No Gain,” shows their power right off the bat. It's an unusual blend of Kittie meets Lush trading metal riffing with some surf chord progressions. Track four, “Lost in Those Hours,” starts off deceptively happy and bubble gum, but quickly turns ugly with some sludge and ends happy again. What a ride! From beginning to end, these three women play loosely around the formula of playing heavy—which is a good thing—but the other elements they bring to the table keep them from being predictable. —Donofthedeat (Buttermilk/Rodent Popsicle)

FRONTKICK: *Underground Stories*: CD

I gotta be totally honest—I was wholly prepared to slam this right into the ground. I mean, it looks like some faux Hellcat release, with its punker pinup boy with zipper pants rockin' a starred stereo on the front cover and black-and-white motif on the back. But then I put it on and, frankly, it's not bad. Sure, it's got that post-retro-oi/'77 feel that seems to be all the rage, but there's also a little more going on here. Listen closely, and you can almost hear a dash of *After the Lights Go Out*-era Channel 3 mooshed in there. It don't ever reach light-speed in tempo like that band could when they were in the mood, but they've got at least a comparable amount of catchy hooks, and that makes all the

difference. Also included is a faithful cover of the Clash's “Career Opportunities,” which made me smile, 'cause their Spanish accents render the word “jobs” into “yobs,” and there's also a hidden track in Spanish that's pretty good, too. I'm mightily impressed and this 'un's a keeper. —Jimmy Alvarado (Bronco Bullfrog)

FUCK YOU UPS: *Black and Black and Black*: CD

From the silhouetted, scoped rifles on the cover, to the title, to the band name, to the ominous riot cop with big teeth artwork on the insert, I was expecting anti-authority crust metal, something in line with what Profane Existence puts out. Not even close. Picture early Screeching Weasel: super snotty vocals that you'd swear were Ben's at times, but they're more political than mainly dealing with teenage fuckup-isms and fueled by less happy-sounding guitar work and you wouldn't be too far off. Actually, it's quite enjoyable, catchy, sneaky, and solid pop punk. —Todd (File 13)

FUCKED UP: *Live*: 12”

When I hear that there is a buzz on a band, a lot of times I look the other way. I can be a very selfish person and want to discover my own music. I have passed up many a good band because of their popularity. But I couldn't hide from this one. I have bought most of their material for a friend in Finland but never had the inkling to take a sample. The only sample came off their appearance on the *Toronto Omnibus* comp. I liked what I had heard but could not get past my thick-headed ways and seek out more. By way of my brother, this was thrust upon me and I had to face this band head on. First off, I see that it was a live recording. Bias was building quickly and that was not on a positive note. But what the hey, it was on clear vinyl, one-sided, and was silk-screened on the record. The cover was also screened. The nerdiness inside was engorging from those points alone. The urge to put it away and never play it or to give it a spin was a tough choice. I gave in and pulled it out of its paper protection. First off, this sounds nothing like a live concert recording but a live recording in a studio on an audio eight track. Waves and waves of childhood memories flashed before my eyes. So raw. So pure. I was taken back in time to the birth of what some call hardcore. It was not a battle of who could play the fastest. It was every band playing what they thought was their interpretation of punk. I hate to use this analogy because so many people use this band like throw away toilet paper, but I have to reference this to the energy level of Black Flag. Also, I take elements of bands like Negative Approach, Offenders, and BGK to add to my description of what I hear. To record their stylings in a full-blown studio and dummieing it down to sound more punk would have been a disservice. The in-studio live approach in audio is the perfect approach and medium to reproduce punk. To put this out on vinyl makes this even worthier. I have listened to this record more than five times and I have not grown tired. As things come full circle in terms of what comes around, this is a band that plays music that can stand the test of time. —Donofthedeat (Schizophrenic)

FUE, THE: *The First EP*: CDEP

Now having been a reviewer for two zines, it still amazes me what pieces of crap show up that do not fall under our coverage area. Case in point, this CD. We have all seen this before. A unknown band on the bill consisting of guys in their late '30s to early '40s. Crowd up by the front of the stage consists of family members and friends that look like they haven't seen the dark side of 10:00 p.m. in over a decade. From the first chord to the last, you are bombarded by an array of boring rock songs that only they seem energized by. A release that would be in the quarter bin, no matter what decade. —Donofthedeat (Emerald City)

GBH: *Punk Junkies*: CD

Okay, I'll be the first to admit that this is not as bad as I thought it was eight years ago, when I first heard it and proclaimed it the biggest pile of, uh, aural misery I'd ever heard. I will also be the first to admit that I still don't think it's very good. The driving punk that made GBH so special had given way to mediocre heavy metal by this time this came out, and this is rife with fully realized chugga-chugga anthems sure to make the dirtheads pleased as punch but the punk rock punters perpetually perplexed. If you're new to the GBH thang, stick to their early stuff, from *Leather Bristles* to *City Baby's Revenge* and proceed with extreme caution from that point forward. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

GREAT REDNECK HOPE, THE: *Behold the Fuck Thunder*: CD

While it's more of the same as *'Splosion!*, more of the same from this band is simply fucking awesome. Sure, most of these songs are ridiculously short, but extending them would serve no purpose—much as early hardcore songs were extremely direct and frequently clocked in at the one-minute mark, TGRH simply gets the musical idea across and moves to the next song because there isn't any practical reason to belabor the point. Again, TGRH's wicked sense of humor is one of the focal points—song titles like “Let's Fall in Love over AIM so We Can Fuck When We Meet at Cornerstone” do an outstanding job of revealing a skewed worldview while also neatly mocking pretty much everyone (with what seems to be more of a focus on religion this time out). Blistering technical riffs, throat-scorching screams—my girlfriend calls this sort of thing cat-fuck rock for a reason. —Puckett (Thinker Thought)

GREEN HORNET: *Backlash*: 7”

Not to be confused with the Green Hornets, whom i believe were from England, the One True Hornet Of Greenitude first proffer a pounding slab of something-or-another called “High Heel Appeal,” which is not to be confused with “High Heel, Big Deal” (by the Spikes, was it?) which sounds like the kind of song that one hears when one walks into a show while one of the opening bands is playing their last song, and causes said observer to think that the band is not half bad, and perhaps they had erred in not catching more of

the set, and this is followed by "Beat 'em Up," a keyboard-driven instrumental (with a brief Davie Allan & the Arrows fetish) that sounds like something the Waistcoats would have recorded at 45, but slowed down to 33 (or perhaps generic discotheque music from a 1967 B-movie or TV show), and is not to be confused with *Muss 'em Up* Donovan, a pro-police brutality comic book cop from the late '30s. Side two starts with "Cheap Move," another instrumental which is not, at any cost, to be confused with Cheap Trick, who covered the song "California Man" by The Move, and ends with "Teen-Age Trash," which is not to be confused with "Teenage Treats" by the Wasps and has vocals. Not completely satisfying in and of itself, but potential-laden enough to pique one's interest in future releases, or am i just confused? BEST SONG: "High Heel Appeal" BEST SONG TITLE: "Cheap Move," because i like both those bands. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I am not so sure i am cool with there being no green on the record cover. —Rev. Nørb (Kuriosa)

HATED PRINCIPLES: MTA: 7"

A certain Mr. Ofthedeath plays bass in this band, and based on what I know of Don's musical taste, it sounds like the kind of band that he would be in. The first song reminds me of mid-'80s crossover stuff, like *Dealing with It* by DRI, before crossover became full-blown metal. The second song, "Cops from Hell," reigns the metal back in a little bit and sounds like Suicidal Tendencies, right down to the subject matter. The third song is completely out of left field and sounds like an awk-

ward late '80s Ramones ballad. The fourth song brings it back into Suicidal territory with vocals bordering on falsetto. It's better than every Suicidal Tendencies album that's come out in the past twenty years, that's for sure. —Josh (Gothic Gospel)

HATED PRINCIPLES: MTA: 7"

Hated Principles have been around for awhile (starting in 1982 and they were on the *We Got Power* #3 comp.), popping up in strange places and at weird times. The last time I saw them, the singer Captain Anarchy was in a wheel chair with a broken leg and they were playing in something of an antiques/junk/collectibles store. The sides of the record are a split personality. The first two songs, "Punk's Only a Word" and "Cops from Hell," are straight ahead thrashers, reminiscent at different times, of MDC, Motörhead, and mid period DRI, where there are metally leads, but they're kept—sorta—in check. The B-side's "Blind Faith" and "M.T.A." are death rock with pop overtones. Picture Christian Death lead by Lance Hahn of J Church singing. Both songs are actually quite catchy and pretty. Not a bad 7". One of the members is Donofthedickies or something like that. —Todd (Gothic Gospel)

HATED PRINCIPLES: MTA: 7"

Hated Principles were an early '80s LA punk band. They made their way onto some Mystic comps and released a pretty solid album, but they never really caught on. One of the former members of Hated Principles went on to become Donofthedeath, *Razorcake*

record reviewer. So, yeah, full disclosure: this is my buddy Don's band's seven inch. I'm always a little hesitant when a friend gives me his band's record, because, if I don't like it, I'm put in an uncomfortable situation. Luckily, I really like this seven inch. If I'm not mistaken, it's two old Hated Principles songs re-recorded, and two newer songs. The songs explore the hardcore territory between Black Flag and Ill Repute, with a little Adolescents thrown in. There's even a goofy, RKL-type song called "MTA" to wrap this record up. All four of these songs bring me back to a musical era that I love. It feels like a lost gem. I just think they should've been the Hated Principals. —Sean (Gothic Gospel)

HEADWOUND: Ginmill: CD
So-so, straight-ahead, hard-as-nails, shitty-luck punk. Nothing to begrudge them on, it's just that I can't pull one thing that makes them distinctive in any way, shape, or form. Includes a passable cover of John Denver's "Leaving on a Jetplane." —Todd (Haunted Town)

HELLBILLYS: Blood Trilogy Vol. II: CD
The first thing I thought when the music came out of my speakers was a psychobilly version of H2O. Disagree? Tough. That is my opinion and you can call me a loser until the day I die. Psychobilly is so hit and miss, but this one will be a keeper. The songs have a stronger punk edge than the more traditional stuff that is common on the scene today. Faster is the key here and they sound like they go all out, not like the last Tiger Army release that made me drink more caffeine to stay awake.

To go with all that, you get a Pushead cover, too! —Donofthedeath (Split Seven)

HELLSTOMPER: Fine... Forget It (1994-2004): CD
It's southern rock that decided, fine, forget it, we suck. Their songs are about touring, alcohol, and being bad good ol' boys. The rock'n'roll riffs and the country boy redneck style of vocals give meaning to NASCAR races: it just keeps going on and on and it doesn't change. It's *Joe Dirt* meets Puddle of Mudd. Dig a hole and bury it. —Gabe Rock (Steel Cage)

HIPBONE SLIME AND THE KNEE TREMBLERS: Confidential: 7"
Two songs of stripped down rock-'n'roll in the Billy Childish style. This little seven inch boasts some back-up vocals by punk rock's answer to Nancy Sinatra, Holly Golightly. Veteran of the Milkshakes and the Masonics, Mickey Hampshire, lends his vocals and guitar. And the rest of the Childish cronies conspire to belt out two songs that could make Alan Freed dance in his coffin. —Sean (Voodoo Rhythm)

HOT WATER MUSIC: The New What Next: CD
I once thought that the review I penned of Down By Law's last album was the toughest I would ever have to write; I tried to recuse myself from the start on that one due to my personal association with the guys in the band but that one flew about as well as a dead seagull. Now this. When I revived my zine after a hiatus of several years, Hot Water Music was the first band that I interviewed. They were one of the bands

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that made me realize that something existed beyond shitty, third-generation Bad Religion and NOFX ripoffs that wasn't Crass or Bay Area pop punk. It was raw, complex, heartfelt, sincere—it just flat out fucking killed me. It took me a while to get it—I had to spend some time with *Fuel for the Hate Game* and *Forever and Counting*. I had to open my ears a little more, expand my idea of what music might and could be. I can't even count how many times I've listened to them now, how many times I've played those songs on the radio in the middle of the night. When *A Flight and a Crash* rolled around and polarized HWM's fan base, I got that album too. Even though I could understand why people were pissed about that record, I couldn't agree with them because I still heard the things in it that made me fall in love with the band—it wasn't a replica of an earlier album; instead, they pulled off at a rest area, gave some directions about how to get to the next stop on the musical journey and took off without looking back to see who followed. Then *Caution* dropped and, once again, plugged into a void in my life. I can't even count how many times I've listened to "Trusty Chords" now, but I had it on repeat for something on the order of five weeks. And now it's past one a.m. and I can't tell if I simply don't have any more voids left to fill or if this album is as much of a letdown as I fear it is. Maybe it's that I've matured past the music... but I don't think that's true because I fucking hate Michelle Branch and think the Shikari disc in my player is one of the most awesome things I've heard this year. Maybe it's the circumstances I'm in right now—for once, I'm relatively settled. I'm employed, in a good relationship... things are going pretty well for me, so maybe it's the comparative lack of conflict and struggle... except that can't be it either because I'm gearing up for a four-year fight and HWM's old albums are the perfect soundtrack for it. What I'm increasingly left with is that this album isn't so much of a stylistic advance or musical experimentation as it is a puzzling detour into relatively flat, uninteresting territory—sort of like driving across the Midwest with nothing more than a thermos of coffee and a tape that is only sort of okay to keep you company. Sure, on the surface it seems superficially similar. There are still two guitars, the rhythm section is still one of the best ones in punk, but something is missing. The songs seem slower, more moderately paced; they seem more conventional and restrained. Whereas older albums frequently sounded like the band was pushing to break through some unseen and unperceived barrier that only they could recognize, this album sounds like they took a breather, almost as if these songs were written from a template that the band developed years ago or an equation that returned tracks from the values they entered. Hell, even Scott Sinclair's artwork looks radically different for this record. Sure, there are some great moments—"Ink and Lead" is as good a love song as they've ever written, "Giver" closes out the album in a classic Hot Water Music stop-and-go breakdown mode, and "The End of the Line" is yet another moment of solace for fans who are lonely, feeling out of control, or who need to open up and experience something new... or maybe all of the above. The problem is that these redemptive moments, the

handful of soaring, swelling, transcendent guitar lines which make the world seem better, if only for a moment, are dramatically fewer in number this time; while everything that initially drew me to Hot Water Music is still present, it's muted, subdued and in limited quantities. But hey, we all grow up, right? We all get older. I've come to the realization over the years that my affection for and appreciation of some bands will last forever; other bands are more like passengers on the same plane or bus or train—maybe we exchange a few friendly words while we wait to leave, we travel together for a while and maybe realize that other people feel similarly or even the same as we do right now and we feel better for a while. However, no trip lasts forever. Sooner or later, someone has to change direction and while that may mean that we part ways—perhaps only temporarily—it doesn't mean that we can't remember and celebrate the good time we had together. —Puckett (Epitaph)

JE NE SAIS QUOI, THE: *Secret Language*: CDEP

Electroclash music with a fair bit of punk energy (think International Noise Conspiracy with lower production values) that doesn't really go anywhere interesting. If you really need to hear this, go buy the first DFA comp and listen to the Rapture's contribution—you'll hear everything on this disc and how it could be done better. —Puckett (Coalition)

JESU: Self-titled: CD

An individual named Justin Broadrick used to play guitar for Napalm Death and Godflesh. He quit those bands and creates music on his own. Produced here are eight songs, none of which clock in at under six minutes. Reminds me a lot of Godflesh but in a slower, more monotonous manner. This CD feels like committing suicide by using a pushpin. It's going to take a very long time. —Donofthedeat (Hydra Head)

JUNIUS: *Forcing out the Silence*: CDEP

This could have easily been passed up and neglected. Self-described as having influences of the Cure, Placebo, and A Perfect Circle, this EP definitely has all those elements. Take the darkness of the Cure's best and mix it with the heaviness of A Perfect Circle and moodiness of Placebo. That's the creation this band has morphed itself into. The songs are intriguing without me losing attention. I feel like I'm swimming in a mind-altering drug hallucination. Their use of feedback is dreamy yet powerful, and it adds emotion. Might not fascinate the masses but this fell into my lap at the right time. —Donofthedeat (Radar)

JUVENTUD CRASA: *Después de Tanto Tiempo*: CD

So far as I can glean, these kids are from Puerto Rico and they belt out some mean punk/hardcore not unlike Argentina's Dos Minutos, meaning there's some pop hooks buried underneath all the yelling. Lyrics are in Spanish, but translations are provided for those not hip to that language. This puppy's gonna get played lots. —Jimmy Alvarado (Southkore)

KNOCKOUT PILLS, THE: *1 + 1 = Ate*: CD

For a long time we Tucson folk were making the KO Pills live up to earlier

local superstar bands they are former members of. The Pills must be tired of that, so they made an amazing album to make us forget the oldies. Catchy, jumpy, rad songs you can pogo to or cry in your bedroom over. Lots of snot dripping on the song writing, lots of melody in the rawkness, this is not a young band trying to figure it out but four guys with a lot of music under their belts. The teacher made an album the students can love. —Speedway Randy (Estrus)

KNOW MASSIVE: *Mood Swing Set*: CD

With their mellow, trip-hop vibe, they're a tad reminiscent of Portishead (who they sample on at least one song), and the MC flowing across the top has a smooth delivery that compliments the backing track nicely. While this doesn't immediately set the barn a-burnin', I know it's gonna grow on me pretty darn quick. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.moodswingrecords.com)

KODIAKS: *Cherry Blossom, Evil and Alcohol*: 7"

Primitive, lo-fi grunt punk produced by Tim Kerr. Dunno if it's the copy I picked up or not, but the mastering is awful. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.supersecretrecords.com)

KREAMY 'LECTRIC SANTA: *Great Plans Laid to Rest*: 7"

Drug-riddled lo-fi psyche punk culled from a fourteen-year span (1990-2004). When it's slower, less focused, and includes sound collages, it's reminiscent of Bongwater and Smegma, which can be annoying and interesting in quick turns. Faster tracks have the unexpectedly lit fireworks in your back pocket, ass-on-fire feel of early Butthole Surfers. Picture a map as a drop cloth. Eat too much of an international buffet at a questionable casino; puke it all up. What happens? Different types of chunks, splattered all over the map. Starts with blips, ends with an acoustic song. —Todd (Shut Up, \$5 ppd.)

KRUMBUMS: *Cut into Me*: 7"

Austin hardcore—now there's a phrase I haven't said in at least two decades and one I never expected to utter again. While they ain't the Big Boys or Dicks, this progeny of that scene of yore do it justice here by not sucking. —Jimmy Alvarado (Slab-O-Wax)

LADYKILLERS: *Welcome to Rock'n'Roll Kid*: CD

Where do these bands come up with these god damn stupid band names, anyway? What, was "Heartbreakers" taken or something? Oh... uh... never mind. I guess it was. Twice. But, then again, so what? Who's counting? Surely we could dock no points for lack of originality from a band who boldly bestowed their CD cover with a ground-breaking color scheme of red and black (*genius!*)—a band who paints their name in white on the backs of black leather jackets (*brilliant!*)—a band that endorses sideburns (*shocking!*)—and even cigarettes (*author!*)! No sir, the Ladykillers blaze trails, and the rest of you crippled munchkins have no choice but to follow! But, further, exactly what happens to the short "a" and long "e" sounds when bands like these habitually substitute other, presumably more rockin' vowel sounds for them, like the long "a"? I mean, when they sing about "drankan" and

"heart atake muhshaynes," what happens to the "ih" and the "ee" and the "ah" things? Are they recycled? Broken down for parts? Sold on eBay™? Distributed to needy families in their community? *Rock'n'roll is a very perplexing cosmos indeed!* However, if we can get past the Lady Killing and the Heart Breaking and the Drankan' and all like that, this band trots the middle ground between the rock'n'rolly pop-punk of the Teen Idols (what! no! imagine!), and the not-so-poppy punky rock'n'roll of the Heartdrops, breaking a few ladies and killing a few hearts along the way, especially with their uptempo raveups like "Krystin" and "Two Faced Man." Things also descend into dokey neo-Dropkick sing-a-longs like "Drinking (excuse me, i meant "Drankan") with the Boys," which is the exact kind of song written by and for people attempting to persuade themselves into believing they're not as stone bored with drankan' with each other as they undoubtedly are, and also the type of song i've been known to feed jukeboxes dollar upon dollar, selecting the longest possible songs available to me, to block the playing of. Taken as a whole, though, not a bad effort: Anyone to whom sideburns, cigarettes and black leather jackets act as a genital stimulant will not be disappointed in this purchase; those who might be a bit more wary as to the band's potential for cliché transcendment are advised to seek succor elsewhere. BEST SONG: "Krystin" BEST SONG TITLE: "She Pours It Well" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I thought of the Heartbreakers quip before i realized they actually covered "Won't Back Down" here. —Rev. Nørb (No. 3)

LAST TARGET:

What Caused the Problem?: 7"

In 2000, TKO released an album by Thug Murder, three Japanese girls who could play streetpunk better than just about every blue-collar British pub crawler who tried their hand at the genre. I saw Thug Murder open up for the Swingin' Utters and Dropkick Murphys in 2001, and they were great. All energy. Punk as fuck. Then, they seemed to disappear. I have no idea what happened to them, but Ryoko, Thug Murder's singer, is obviously singing on this Last Target record. It's not as catchy as that Thug Murder album, but these two songs are everything you want in a streetpunk album. It's good stuff. —Sean (TKO)

LATEST, THE: Self-titled: LP

Definitely wasn't expecting this. Actually, I wasn't sure what to expect, but I know it wasn't country music. To be honest, it's not *bad* country music, but it's not straightforward Hank Williams-style country, either. It reminds me of the slower, weirder parts of bands like Masters of the Obvious (especially in the lyrics), Guided by Voices (vocally sometimes), and the Kent 3 (mostly just the guitars), and I get the feeling that these guys have listened to quite a bit of the Country Teasers as well. This record's growing on me, except for the third song on the second side (I don't know the names of the songs because the artwork, although really cool, is confusing), which I instantly liked. And how do you not like a record label called Peer Pressure Zombie? A recommended curveball. —Josh (Peer Pressure Zombie) **RAZORCAKE 83**

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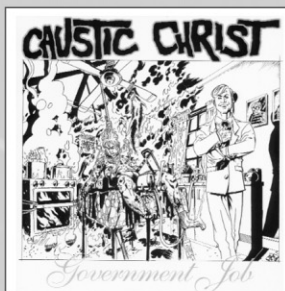
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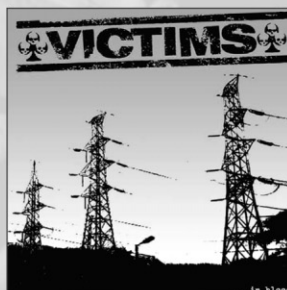
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DS 13 Aborted Teen Generation
TEAR IT UP S/T
CAUSTIC CHRIST S/T
TAMPERE SS Kuolutt & Kuopattu
TAMPERE SS SS Sotaa
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LATIN DOGS:
Warning: 7"

A bootleg of an EP from a '80s Michigan hardcore band made famous by their inclusion on a couple of now-famous bootleg punk comps, apparently done up all nice and purty like it came out way back when, right down to the lyric sheet. Sounding like a cross between *American Wino*-era Lewd and the Zero Boys, these guys definitely had it goin' on. Dunno how many of 'em are out there, but I suggest you collector whores start looking. —Jimmy Alvarado (Kazaaamo, no address)

LEAVING TRAINS:
Amplified Pillows: CD

Three different lineups present, in all their sloppy glory, twenty-two tracks from two different live shows and a live session from KXLU, circa 1987-2002. I was gonna wax poetic and extol the virtues of the Leaving Trains 'n' shit, but fuck it. Suffice it to say that if you dig 'em this'll more than satisfy, and if you don't, well then maybe the new Whitney Houston album will be more your speed. —Jimmy Alvarado (Steel Cage)

LEE MARVIN
COMPUTER ARM:
Self-titled: CD

Arty spazz rock a la the Piranhas, or maybe even the Cows if they were suffering from meth psychosis or something. The perfect soundtrack for the always-fun next morning hangover or hitting yourself square in the forehead with a brick. —Jimmy Alvarado (Conspirators In Sound)

LEFTOVER CRACK:
Rock the 40 oz.: CD

I read on the internet that this band is punk rock. Young people all over the nation are proclaiming this band as true punk rock, this band being the shite! Fucking punk rock, dude! So here I am, getting ready to hear what is the godhead of all punk bands. Now let's hear the opinion of an old fart who has clothes older than some who made these proclamations. First off, the title of this release already makes this seem moronic without even opening it. Inside the cover is an illustration boldly stating *Got Crack?* Okay, we get the humor. This is going to be in the mold of Guttermouth or NOFX. Hey! I see that these recordings are from *back in 'da day*, 1999. Let's pop this puppy in and what comes out. Melodicore! Hallelujah! Ska parts! I'm weak in the knees and ready to lose it in my shorts! Boy, were those kids right! Actually, I wish this was picked up by Jimmy Alvarado for review. —Donofthead (Bankshot)

LEFTOVER CRACK:
Rock the 40 oz.: CD

I wonder if the kids in Operation Ivy ever cuss themselves out over their direct influence on the inundation of sub-par skacore that has come in their wake. If not, they really should. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.bankshotrecords.com)

LET'S GROW:
Neverending Story: 7"

These guys are plenty pissed off, and they play really fast 'n' mean to let you know it. If this had been released in, say 1985, old L.A. DJ Adam Bomb would've been giving it massive airplay on his "Final Countdown" show,

sandwiched in between Septic Death and Beyond Possession. —Jimmy Alvarado (Know)

LIDS, THE: Too Late: 7"

Got this based on Contaminated Records' good review, which never seems to fail. Tinny treble, but with girls in the band it *all* comes together. Although they are cute and dress nice, this is not a case of a label signing a band based on a photo. The Lids' tear it up Rip Off style, short and fast and very-nicely-catchy, with three songs I feel good walking around the house humming. —Speedway Randy (www.dieslaughterhausrecords.com)

LITTLE BRAZIL:
You and Me: CD

Yes, i'd like a Mega-Whiny™ value meal, a side order of fried Whinies™, a large Diet Whiny™ to drink, and one Hot Apple Whiny™ for dessert. And it better be *whiny*™, you... you MAN, you! (munch, smack) Oh yeah! That's *goood* whiny™. BEST SONG: I like "You and Me" because it sounds the most like Bobby Sherman. BEST SONG TITLE: "The Way You Listen" is not necessarily a good song title, but it is a good concept. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The outer packaging depicts two ownerless ping pong paddles in a presumably pitched ping pong match, but the diameter of the two holes punched in the UPC code is exactly that of the ping pong ball in use—which, taking into account the white disc tray showing thru the holes, makes it appear as though there are three different ping pong balls in the field of play! Surely this match cannot be sanctioned by any reputable governing body! —Rev. Nørb (Mt. Fuji)

LOCAL DIVISION:
Pure Electric Light: CDEP

They sound like some loud English alterna rock band, with a "Bowie records with the Psychedelic Furs for Creation Records" kinda new wavy feel, but the band's contact address is in L.A. Strange. Guess the only thing that matters is that they do what they do well, even if the Limey accent may be an affectation. —Jimmy Alvarado (Intravenous)

LOCOMOTIONS, THE:
Teacher: 7"

I'm already a big fan of their full-length and of Martin Savage's previous band the Blacks (from Sweden) so I felt pretty safe grabbing this new 7". No disappointment, straight ahead rock and roll with eager lyrics that make me think of kids in the '50s and '60s jumping up and down on the bed with the turntable on. —Speedway Randy (Big Neck)

LORDS: The House That Lords Built: CD

Roaring out of the gates with nine songs which wouldn't sound out of place on a Black Cross record, Lords play a similar sort of muscular, punishing, brutal, blistering, chaotic, guitar-driven rock which usually verges on hardcore. The tenth track on this disc is about ten minutes of tape manipulation and silence. While it's enjoyable enough, it's fairly short, even counting the semi-hidden track. Of course, I'm not sure that extending these songs would make them any better—perhaps it's the case that their brevity enhances their power; frankly, hearing any one of these songs reach the three-minute

mark would probably make them far less immediate, musically engaging, and interesting. —Puckett (Initial)

LOSIN STREAKS, TH':
Sounds of Violence: CD

Note apostrophe placement. Another fuzzed-out four piece in button downs, ties and sunglasses. Like the Makers and the Fells, but from Sacramento. Very Bellingham, very Estrus, very done. —Jessica T (Th' Losin Streaks)

LOST SOUNDS:
Self-titled: CD

Although I took a liking to the Lost Sounds almost immediately, and admired a lot of their music, I've recently reached this conclusion: they're a great band. This CD and seeing them live the last time they came through LA just seals it. They're too expansive to be pegged as solely new wave or garage. No mere passing dalliance, their keyboards go from accenting the guitars and modulating the mood, to becoming electronic pythons that slither and snake through the foreground, to being used as percussion instruments. They're too inventive to be a kitsch act, although they do have certain "darker side of science" sensibilities (this outing includes songs of clones not being able to love and mechanical feelings). This album sounds like a watershed of many of the ideas they've been exploring in previous releases, and the result seems more focused, more hypnotic, more paranoid, more direct, and more immediately palatable. Like the end result of a long line of experiments, where the monster's finally fully put together from all the separate parts and the right type of storm comes along and zaps in all the electricity you need. Instead of frying everything in a fire, this beast of an album sits up abruptly, picks up an instrument, and starts dismantling the lab in fantastic ways you've been hoping for. Just when I thought the band was reaching a plateau, the Lost Sounds don't rehash old ground but launch into outer space. —Todd (In the Red)

LUCKY PUNCH:
Kick Up a Hullabaloo: CD

At low volume, one song has an irritating high-pitched beep that made me twitch, an epileptic reaction to strobes. A whiskey-induced tantrum triggered by the beep brought instant death to this CD, which is too bad—I was starting to enjoy it. Track two, "...Just Keep on Goin'," is the best one on the album, beginning with a tight and rumbling bass line and breaking into a tight chorus, which I find quite arousing. Because the CD isn't available for further audio inspection, my last known impression: Supersuckers metal (quantity and quality) and Suicidal Tendencies timing and swagger. It's a shame I can't do a little more justice for these longhairs—but that beep... —Jessica T (Dead Beat)

LYTHION:
From the Beginning: CD

Gloom pop that skates along the thin edge between wimpy goth fodder and wimpy Lilith Fair fodder. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.lythionmusic.com)

MAD CADDIES, THE:
Live from Toronto:
Songs in the Key of Eh: CD

I was expecting some brilliant stuff from this record the way their fans

always talked them up. The music is played well; the vocals are clear and all that. "Contraband" and "Drinking For 11" are pretty cool songs. But the rest of the CD was just irritating. I guess the problem with having horn players in the band is that you have to have horns on *every fucking song*. At some point I thought I was listening to a 1930's vaudeville recording and Louie Armstrong and Mae West were going to be sampled in. I would think that being on NOFX's label would clue this band into using horns with restraint (Hi, El Hefe!), but I guess they are taking their clues from 311 instead. Cute pictures of circus animals, though. —Sean Koeppenick (Fat)

MARKED MEN, THE:
On the Outside: CD

How good is this album? I bought two copies: one for the car, one for home. —Speedway Randy (Dirtnap)

MDC:
Magnus Dominus Corpus: CD
Leave it to Dave Dictor and MDC to come out of the blue with a new album and not mince words. In addition to a couple of requisite anti-cop tunes (including a reworking of "No More Cops"), the boys dole out stinging slaps to Bush, "poseur punks," dead nazi-skin heroes (a reworking of "Nazis Shouldn't Drive"), Epitaph/NOFX/Rancid and other "rich punks," and many others. While they don't work things up to the pummeling froth of their first three or four EPs and first full-length, they still sound as gloriously radio unfriendly as ever. Nice to hear these guys serve up a healthy dose of "fuck you" to the system once again. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sudden Death)

ME FIRST AND
THE GIMME GIMMES:
Ruin Jonny's Bar Mitzvah: CD

The problem with most parody bands usually boils down to two crucial factors, namely a) they aren't funny and b) they can't play worth a piss. This has failed to be a problem with MFGGs, who, over the course of at least a billion LPs and singles now have managed to take some of the worst songs ever written and not only make them fun, but also make them sound good. No small feat, when we're talking about musical abominations like "Seasons in the Sun," "Delta Dawn," and "I Believe I Can Fly." On their latest, recorded live at a bar mitzvah (with accompanying video to prove it—just stick the CD into your computer and marvel at the slamdancing grannies), the boys in powder blue tuxedos ravage such musical monstrosities as "Stairway to Heaven," "Take It on the Run," "You Were Always on My Mind," and many others before a crowd of horrified dozens. Best of all here are—count 'em—TWO versions of "Hava Nagila," the second of which is a special "Christmas Arrangement" that is guaranteed to have you singing along while you're rolling on the floor. This couldn't come more highly recommended. —Jimmy Alvarado (Fat)

ME FIRST AND
THE GIMME GIMMES:
Ruin Jonny's Bar Mitzvah: CD

To actually play at someone's Bar Mitzvah and to record it is brilliant. The video portion of this proves that they actually performed this stunt. It's **RAZORCAKE 05**

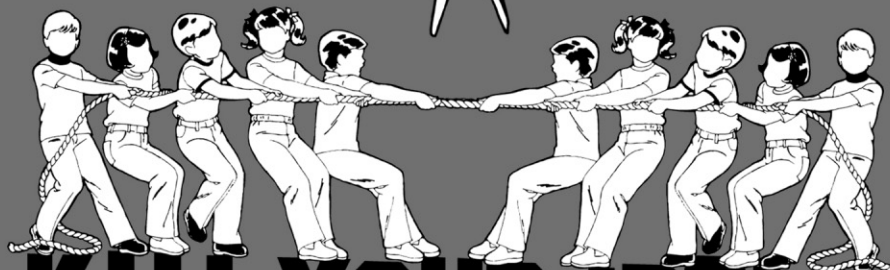
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always funny to see sheltered, generic people get easily shocked. The facial expressions are priceless. Well, the gang busts out some major tunes here. A cover of Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven." If you are a covers geek like me, check out the Dread Zeppelin version. They play Blondie's "Heart of Glass" with a male perspective. Helen Reddy, Styx, Beatles, Billy Joel, Willie Nelson, and REO Speedwagon all get the special treatment from the boys. Scary thing is, minus the Beatles, I remember these songs when they were originally performed by the artists and were new. Merging is the new craft that the band has been incorporating lately. Who would think that the intro to the Adolescents' "Kids of the Black Hole" would work so well with the Carpenters' "Superstar?" "Hava Nagila" and the Offspring's "Come Out and Play"? That's like bowling a strike with the heaviest loaner ball at the alley and accidentally farting from the sheer weight of it. A surprise you didn't expect. Fun as always, you can never go wrong when this band unleashes their humor. Now where can I get one of those cool guitars they had made? —Donofthead (Fat)

ME INFECTO: *Killing Ourselves Slowly*: CDEP

Bass and drums duo that forgoes the pure rock energy of Big Business and the spastic franticism of Lightning Bolt in favor of alternating umbrella—and sledgehammer—beatings. At night. Behind a dumpster full of potatoes and dirty mop heads. In a puddle of broken glass. —Cuss Baxter (Me Infecto)

METHADONES, THE: *Not Economically Viable*: CD
Reminds me of Eddie and the Cruisers for some reason, and that may be bad to you but for me it rules. It's some good ol' fashioned pop punk and, go figure, that's probably because Dan Vapid (Screeching Weasel, Riverdales) and Mike Byrne (Vindictives) played on this release. Some pop from the guys who know how to do it right. So why does it remind me of Eddie and the Cruisers? I don't know. Probably because that's really the only thing that came to mind, dick. —Gabe Rock (Thick)

MILLION DOLLAR MARXISTS:

***Give It a Name*: CD**
Remember a while back when Tesco Vee used to write public love letters to the New Bomb Turks and offer to trim their nose hairs and buff out their shoehorns and puppy love things like that? It was good to see a true Punk God so enthusiastically laud a band that, at least in the early years, was richly deserving of such lofty attention. Then that manic edge that made *Destroy Oh-Boy!* such a stellar album, began to soften and things like horns and pianos and harmonicas started popping up in the songs. I remain hopeful, as I'm sure Mr. Vee does, that the Turks will recapture that stripped down rawk vibe and once again deliver the goods. In the mean time, of course, all manner of NBT wannabe bands are hoping to one day have Tesco Vee loofa-ing *their* backs. Do they stand a chance, you ask? Hard to say. While they've got some of the sass of the early Turks, they've also got some Scandinavian-style guitar

wankery and maybe a few too many sideburns going on—for Tesco, anyway. But I'm not as picky. I'd say it's catchy and rocks well and is, all in all, a pretty solid effort. —Aphid Peewit (Gearhead)

MISERY/PATH OF DESTRUCTION: Split: CD

Misery: Some metallic crust core from a band that's been around since dirt was invented. Their tracks here seem slower than I remember their previous efforts being. Path of Destruction: Another band that's been around the block a few times. They, too, are loud, crusty, and have lyrics that don't mince words regarding how they feel about Bush and the "filthy rich." Although the proceedings weren't as intense as I was expecting 'em to be, this wasn't all that bad, either. —Jimmy Alvarado (Rodent Popsicle)

MOTION PICTURE DEMISE: *Rebuild/Reform*: CDEP

Enough of all this emo hardcore bullshit—I'm calling all of you fuckers out *right now*. It all boils down to this—contemporary emo hardcore (and by this I mean shit like Story of the Year, Atreyu, and so forth) is the contemporary equivalent of power ballads, pure and simple. I am telling each one of you pussies with dyed black hair and ear plugs who screams for catharsis' sake that you are effectively recreating one of the single most commercial styles ever. Bear with me while I explain—heavy metal, fundamentally, was dude rock. That isn't to say that women couldn't play it or appreciate it on its own merits (to cite only one example just because she intimidates the hell out of me, The Great Kat's fretwork blew damn near everyone away), merely that its primary audience was D&D-playing longhairs who wanted to discuss technical complexity (and if you doubt what I'm saying, walk into any comic book store and do a quick survey to see how many people there own an album by Iced Earth or Dream Theater). The dudes in bands recognized that it was, like, a *total* sausage party at the shows and, thus, the power ballad was born to expand the audience. It showed a softer, more sensitive side to the band, effectively stating, "Yeah, we party and shit, but we, like, have *feelings* too, y'know," as banal observations such as "Every Rose Has Its Thorns" flooded the airwaves. So there's your brief history of a musical dark age. You may be asking yourself what the fuck this has to do with emo hardcore and the answer is simple—power ballads and emo hardcore are nearly identical. In most cases, the vocalist switches from crooning to anguished screams, effectively illustrating exactly how much all this, like, *hurts* him, y'know? Meanwhile, the band pulls out the same rehashed chugga chugga riffs to bring the mosh for all the dudes. Pow, there it is. The dudes get to rock out because it's, like, hardcore, y'know? They play guitars and shit and it's, like, heavy. The girls also get to swoon because most of the guys in the bands (and it's dude-dominated by an overwhelming percentage) have more ink than Marvel and DC and more plugs than a sex shop. So that's that then—it's all eye candy and style and people who don't know any better listening to

bands which seem to be saying something terribly emotional and important and affecting with lyrics about lies, angels, deception, denial, betrayal... honestly, don't any of you fuckers *ever* have anything good that happens to you? Is it really all looking for a girl to confide in? Are you always whining because you placed your misguided trust in someone who turned around and hurt you terribly and now you just need a hug? I keep remembering what Nick Hornby wrote about the thousands and thousands of desperate, bitter pop songs describing only loss and fear and I can't think of anything else which more accurately and pointedly describes this genre. I'll put it bluntly—when you assholes realize that writing these overwrought songs about ex-girlfriends keeps you wallowing in your own filth and mires everyone listening in the same muck with you, when you *stop* this behavior, I may try to listen to whatever you come up with next if there's a single original thought in it. Otherwise, fuck off. All of you. Seriously. —Puckett (Orange Peel)

MR. CALIFORNIA AND THE STATE POLICE: *25 Ways to Annoy Your Neighbor*: 7"

Sometimes you trade with people to see what you get in return without knowing what you are trading for. I like rolling the dice like that sometimes. So I get this record and notice that it has twenty-five songs on a 7". Must be a power violence record with thirty-second songs. That was far from the truth once this came out of the speakers. From what I could dig up quickly, this is a one-man project, and a bizarre one at that, armed with a cheap keyboard (Casio?), a drum machine and possibly a guitar. This collection of instruments in turn creates a blend of industrial new wave mixed with blast beats of thrash and odd interludes. To picture my expression, imagine seeing a face with eyes of bewilderment and confusion with an odd tilt trying to balance out the thoughts. Electronic anarchy mixed with a warped sense of humor barely sums up what I am trying to describe what I hear. Fans of Plutocracy, Stikky, Spazz, or Le Scrawl would be the only people able to survive this insanity and enjoy it. —Donofthead (Armpit Toast)

MUDDY RIVER NIGHTMARE BAND: *Who Will Be the Lucky Pierre?*: CD

Rambunctious Portland greaserpunk that breaks no new ground ("Revenge of the Surf Zombies"? I'm just happy the cover isn't a cartoon of a monster driving a tiny car with a giant shifter) and comes off like a meeting between Deadbolt and Zeke. What I don't get is why, after recording a song called "I Love Lucky Lager", they got themselves photographed in a bathtub full of PBR cans. —Cuss Baxter (Last Chance)

MUDDY RIVER NIGHTMARE BAND: *Who Will Be the Lucky Pierre?*: CD

Still sloshing around in Portland, four big guys in vests (their words, not mine) tear through punk like they've been doing it for twenty years. Well, they have. And it shows. Like a

drunken one-night stand, the album is fast, fun and sloppy—with a little morning remorse thrown in for good measure. —Jessica T (Last Chance)

NECK: *Here's Mud in Yer Eye*: CD
Front man Leeson used to be in the Popes, which we know is not the same as the Pogues. However, this album's more reminiscent of the Pogues than anything, but without the polish. Add fiddle, banjo and whistle to drums, guitar, bass and vocals and run it at variable speeds—breakneck, dirge, pint-in-hand pub song. They're traditional, they're punk, they call it psycho-ceilidh. Their website says, "It's a second generation identity crisis thing. You wouldn't understand." Well, I don't for many reasons, but some of you might. —Jessica T (Neck)

NEW BREED, THE: *Off the Beaten Path*: CD

Canadian street punk from Halifax, Nova Scotia, The New Breed play capable, anthemic oi style punk rock with more emphasis on rock (pub style; think old school UK bands like Peter and The Test Tube Babies or The Business) than punk. At times, the singer recalls Paul Bearer of Sheer Terror/Joe Coffee fame (not a bad thing), there's lots of Thunders-style riffage and plenty of working class lyricism to keep quench the thirst of the boot boy crowd and not sinking into meathead-ism to keep the rest of us interested. —Greg Barbera (Thorp)

NEW MEXICAN DISASTER SQUAD/ WESTERN ADDICTION: Split LP

New Mexican Disaster Squad: I'm real close to liking them, but it always slides back to them being just okay. This time out, they've scaled back the Strike Anywhere-isms and headed in a more early Explosion direction with super-clear vocals, swelling guitars, and popping drums. I still just don't hear that extra spark that ignites their own fire, where their songs improve on repeated listens. Western Addiction: Feisty, upbeat, and forceful, they remind me of two bands simultaneously. Seven Seconds because no matter what the song's about, it sounds positive as all hell. Dick Army because, well, they sound an incredible amount like the (unfortunately) obscure and (again, unfortunately) broken up New York band—from the warmly screamed vocals (think burlap, honey, and duct tape) to everything being so tightly wound with no gaps while remaining dirty, sweaty, and blood pumping. —Todd (No Idea)

NINE SHOCKS TERROR: Self-titled: CDEP

Please, please, *please* tell me that this four song EP is not the death knell for this Cleveland war machine! There are very few bands that play this kind of thousand-mile-an-hour punk with the intensity and chops of Nine Shocks Terror, and this just raises the bar that much higher. I'm not exaggerating here. It's absolutely devastating, like a modern-day Articles of Faith. I'd say more, but I'm having a hard time picking my jaw up off the ground. This also comes with a DVD of them destroying audiences at a bunch of different shows. Buy everything this band ever recorded. —Josh (Mad at the World)

**NINJA GUN:
Smooth Transitions: CD**

There is some simply awesome alt-country currently being recorded, probably best represented by Lucero, the Drive-By Truckers and a handful of other groups that seem to have a profound understanding that country is at its best when played in a drunken stupor or when it *sounds* like it was played in a drunken stupor. On the other hand, this album just fucking blows. Sure, there are some half-assed country riffs on here, but this is a rock record first (with liberal applications of generic pop punk influences) and a country album never. Imagine, if you will and if it doesn't sound too revolting, the Riverdales playing country and you'll have a somewhat decent idea of what this sounds like. —Puckett (Barracuda Sound)

**NINJA GUN:
Smooth Transitions: CD**

Wholly uninteresting alt-rock. Was hoping for something a little more interesting, thanks to titles like "Maybe You Should Explode" and "Losers Talking," but this was about as exciting as a yawning competition. —Jimmy Alvarado (Barracuda Sound)

**NO SLOGAN:
National Threat: 7"**

This has that early '80s Midwestern hardcore sound down pat, eschewing hyper-rhythms in favor of growling menace. Think The Fix with cleaner production values and you wouldn't be too far off the mark. —Jimmy Alvarado (Southkore)

**NOFX: The Greatest Songs
Ever Written (by Us): CD**

I don't think there's another active punk band that people "in the know" consistently love to hate more than NOFX. They're seen as little more than a punk gateway band for white suburban youth with backward baseball caps. While far from being as bad as Sum 41 or Good Charlotte, they're rarely mentioned in the same breath with "true" or DIY punk. First hearing them in 1989, I thought they were barely okay funny metal. If you'd heard RKL's *Keep Laughing* and the Meatmen's, *We're the Meatman and You Suck!*, and put them together in your mind, that was much better than NOFX. But, for me, it turned around with *White Trash, Two Heebs, and a Bean* and the induction of El Hefe into the band. Metal was shed in favor of more pop sensibilities. *Punk in Drublic*'s an incredibly catchy album, they modulate tempos, and they all became better musicians. Then something like an unexpected nuclear explosion happened. Somewhere around 1992/1993, ten fucking million bands wanted to sound exactly like NOFX. Bros worldwide—to no direct fault of NOFX—descended on the world in a plague of baggy pants and hoodies, with the incessant clinking of chain wallets, and treated us to about five constant years of lethal levels of awful, derivative, mind-numbing melodicore. I'll admit that, although you can't control how others are going to take inspiration from you, it was a bit much to take, and I quietly put my NOFX records back on the shelf, only listening to them on occasion. But they weathered the melodicore storm,

weathered the ska storm, and are currently weathering the emo boo hoo-athon. Love 'em or hate 'em, they've made the long haul. And although I've never been one to live and die by them, I find myself plucking one of their CDs out of the stacks, popping it in the player, and enjoying it, time and time again. There's something they've tapped into that I'm grateful for. They're still snide and funny. They're easy to listen to. They probably have had the most opportunities to really sell out and turn their backs on punk as a whole when they got more popular, but they keep playing, reinvesting in themselves and their friends, keep churning out new songs, and pissing the right people off. Here's a collection of twenty-seven songs. One's new. For some reason, even though I have all the songs on separate albums, I've been listening to this quite a bit. —Todd (Epitaph)

**NON FIKTION NOIS:
Contaminación Mundial: 7"**

This manages to evoke both the late, great Crudos and memories of assorted bands I saw in East LA backyards in the 1980s, both of which are meant as the highest compliments I could possibly muster. Good 'n' pissed off hardcore, which is how it should be. Considering the outcome of the recent presidential election, I needed a booster shot of rebellious rambunctiousness, and these kids have happily provided it. Thanks. —Jimmy Alvarado (Southkore)

**NOODLE MUFFIN:
Regime Change: CD**

I dunno, at this late date, listening to over an hour's worth of anti-Bush

snippets, sound bytes, loops and dance remixes titled *Regime Change* is a little too much like listening to a whole CD of *Dewey Defeats Truman*, and i'm Dewey. Alas. BEST SONG: "Bush in 200 Words or Less" BEST SONG TITLE: "Kiss My Ashcroft" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: John Kerry gave a "porchside chat" in the yard of a neighbor's house literally a block away from mine this summer, and i sat on the porch eating Taco Bell™ and drinking a 40 while i watched the people streaming by, because i had no idea what was going on. —Rev. Norb (Noodle Muffin)

**NOVI SPLIT:
Keep Moving: CD**

This sounds so much like Bright Eyes that I kept expecting Conor Oberst to jump out of my CD player and ask if I, like, had a hairbrush anywhere, dude. I don't mean that to sound dismissive because this is well done, lo-fi indie pop, but it's so similar as to be almost identical to music you might expect to find on Saddle Creek. —Puckett (Sunset Alliance)

**OFF WITH THEIR HEADS:
Fine-tuning the Bender: 7"**

The A side, "I Hope You All Die," sounds like Bob Mould's vocals over a sea shanty with "I scream, you shout" dual vocals, accompanied by a dirgey organ, which puts it in the same punk minefield as latter day Murder City Devils. The B side and title track starts off the same, then steps on the Crimpshrine accelerator, switches on the J-Church rhythm section, and muffler sparks behind it. After the breakdown, some violin or high string comes in, and it doesn't bend at the

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waist and suck emo boobie. Not a bad debut 7". I like Minneapolis. —Todd (Redemption)

ONE INCH PUNCH, THE:

Horsehead Nebula: CD

Violin + screeching + Zeppelin + jazz + outerspace + algebraic calculus + metal + "becoming unwound" = eclecticrap: I get bored and keep wandering out of the room, forgetting what I'm supposed to be doing. Martian doodle-rock. —Cuss Baxter (Collective)

ORGAN, THE:

Grab That Gun: CD

Female fronted gloom pop not too derivative to be quickly dismissed, but also not so consistently enthralling to elicit a heartfelt "wow" when it was over. —Jimmy Alvarado (Mint)

PAUL IS DEAD: Let

the Losers Slug It Out: CD

Noise pop sure to wet the panties of Sonic Youth, shoegazer and college rock fans alike. —Jimmy Alvarado (Five Sister)

PAX CECILIA, THE:

Nouveau: CD

This is an odd musical of sorts that entails three acts. The music is super mellow in a symphonic way and changes direction at times to a more metallic emo sound. Closest thing I can think that this might sound like is Jethro Tull. —Donofthedeath (The Pax Cecilia)

PIDGEON:

From Gutter with Love: CD

Discordant, disjointed noise. These songs try to have an expansive sweep, but wind up sounding like a mess of

screamed and crooned vocals, mismatched instrumentation, and misguided attempts at swooning shoegaze—it's a bit like combining the worst excesses of early 1990s indie bands with none of the melodies or artistic conceits that made any of them interesting. Rapidly shifting between styles really doesn't make the music more dynamic or engaging—it just makes this album a stylistic, inconsistent, and incoherent mess. —Puckett (Absolutely Kosher)

PINEY GIR:

Peakahokahoo: CD

Twee synth-pop which sounds like little more than incidental music for early Nintendo games. —Puckett (Greyday)

PONIES, THE: Self-titled: 7"

Dunno if it's all that desert heat or the fact that they live so close to a big hole in the ground, but Arizona cranks out some mighty interesting bands. Noisy, silly, and weird in all the right ways, these kids are. —Jimmy Alvarado (Knifechase)

Q AND NOT U: Book of Flags b/w X-Polynation: 7"

Spaz post-punk dancecore from this trio from DC. Musically off-kilter and angular with almost chant-like vocals. The "Dischord Sound" is slightly evident but not overbearing. This was released in September of '03 and recorded at Inner Ear with Ian himself. Very dynamic and quirky. You think you can't dance to punk? Well, ya fucking can. Definitely worth picking up. —Buttertooth (Dischord)

RAJBOT: Self-titled: 7"

Barely irritating experimental hip-hop

on marbled vinyl. The ones without the raps are better. —Cuss Baxter (Sedition)

RANCID VAT: We Hate You All the Way from Texas: CD

These white trash motherfuckers hate me all the way from Texas. But I hate Texas, so everything kind of evens out. The music has a thrashy, power-chord-ed barbecue flavor. In fact, yes, I am going to compare them to barbecue sauce: sometimes you love it, sometimes you hate it. They say they've been around since '81, and you would think they would have perfected a Ramones cover over that time, but instead they butcher it with just enough reverb on the vocals to fuck it up, although they make up for it with track six, "I'll Never Make It Out of This World Alive." All in all, this album isn't all that bad. —Gabe Rock (Steel Cage)

REACTORS, LOS:

Dead in the Suburbs: CD

After decades of releases featuring bands aping the "Killed by Death" sound, Rip Off finally hits pay dirt by managing to secure some of the real thing. This is the recorded works of a late '70s/early '80s punk band from Oklahoma, of all places, who at the time of their existence managed only a few singles. Those are included here, along with a live set to round things off. In all, some great tunes here and kudos are due to Lowery for making 'em available again. —Jimmy Alvarado (Rip Off)

REATARDS, THE:

Bedroom Disasters: CD

High expectations: legendary teenage band with only two full-length albums,

members all in other great bands now, release a compilation of singles and "lost" songs from cassette tapes found in dusty boxes. Expectations met. This is rock and roll. —Speedway Randy (Empty)

REATARDS, THE:

Bedroom Disasters: CD

The Reatards are a band that has gained a lot of notoriety since they broke up, as they have gone on to turn underground music on its ear in bands like the Lost Sounds and Destruction Unit, but this collection of their early stuff is proof that they should be remembered on their own merits and not just as a footnote. Wait a second. What am I doing? Am I trying to analyze the Reatards? Forget that. Here's what you need to know: it's a forty-minute mess of wild, unhinged Memphis slop made by kids who probably weren't old enough to drive. The sound quality is better than you might expect considering that most of it was recorded in a bedroom onto a cassette tape that has spent a few years in a dusty shoebox. It's worth getting just for the song "Teenage Hate." —Josh (Empty)

RED FLAG 77:

Stop the World: CD

Some mighty fine Limey punk rock here that sometimes sounds like a weird crossbreed of the Hard-Ons, Leatherface, and some old oi band I can't quite place, especially on "Time Has Been Called," and they manage to do justice to the Clash's "What's My Name," a feat considerably more difficult than one would guess. Some work was put into making this, and it shows. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)



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**REPERCUSSION:
And the Winner Is...: CD**

"Waiting in the alley with bats in our hands / Standing by the exit ready to smash your face in / Blood-stained brass knuckles taped for fit / Once we start this beatdown, we won't quit..." Those lyrics alone sums up what I think of this band. East Coast jock hardcore. —Donofthedeat (Spook City)

**ROSETTA WEST:
X Descendant: CD**

"Savage and psychedelic blues" which, while occasionally psychedelic, is practically never savage and bears more resemblance to Creedence Clearwater Revival than to either X or the Descendents. I suspect the psychedelic part comes from ingestion of that kind of LSD that makes every little guitar doodle seems really fuckin' awesome, not to mention the worst version ever of "Shakin' All Over." Bayou doodlerock. —Cuss Baxter (Alive)

**RUMBLESEAT:
Discography: CD**

A few years ago, at the height of my appreciation for all things Hot Water Music, a friend of mine taped a few Rumbleseat songs for me, telling me that it was a country side project of Chuck and Chris from Hot Water Music. It started off with the song "Picker," and I wasn't too impressed. The tape continued with "Saturn in Crosshairs" and it made me very glad that I kept listening. I feel the same way about this CD. The upbeat songs, whether they're about getting drunk or being "crazier than a shithouse rat,"

are pretty hokey, like *Hee Haw* but not as funny. I'd rather listen to a whole album of the slow burners like "Trestles." It's full of everything that's been missing from the recent Hot Water Music material, and it's amazing. In the end, even though there are songs I don't like, I wore out my Rumbleseat tape and I'm glad I have a replacement for it. —Josh (No Idea)

**SATAN'S PILGRIMS:
Plymouth Rock: CD**

I've had a soft spot for surf music ever since I became fascinated with both Agent Orange and JFA, so this collection, an apparent "best of" set from a Northwestern group who were contemporaries, but apart from, the grunge scene that took over that area of the country in the late '80s and early '90s, was a nice bit of listening for me. It's all surf instrumentals—thirty tracks worth—and they're mighty fine tunes at that. I'd heard the name before, but had never bothered to investigate, so this was a nice, welcome surprise. Cool take on the *Godfather* theme, too. —Jimmy Alvarado (MuSick)

**SCRAGS, THE:
A Three Act
Trash'n'roll Show
in Mono: demo: CD**

The title of this demo pretty much says it all. It's three trash'n'roll songs that sound like they were recorded in someone's basement. The Scraggs tread the same ground as The Humpers or The Loud Pipes. It's beer soaked rock'n'roll. On one hand, it'll get a punk rocker's foot tapping, but on the other hand, if The Scraggs played the bar in a bowling alley, the greasers there

would probably dig it. Not totally original, but well done. —Sean (www.thescrags.com)

**SCURVY DOGS:
It's All Gonna End: CD**

These San Francisco punks have a sound that I would say fits in perfectly with the music that was being hosted in the now-defunct Burnt Ramen and Mission Records, but may not fit in with what I see booked at Gilman. I'm not a local of the Bay Area by any means, but from my personal experiences the past couple of decades and first-hand accounts from friends, this is my perception. A fast punk sound that has dirty almost gutter punk edge to it that reminded me of the Battalion of Saints. Screamed vocals over fast guitar parts that are played precisely but can fall apart at any moment. The drummer sounds as if he had one too many speedballs and bangs away trying to release all the built up adrenaline. If this is how they sound in a studio, imagine how they will sound live. Brutal. —Donofthedeat (Rodent Popsicle)

SERMON, THE: Volume: CD

Stop me if you've heard this one in the last twenty years or so, but I think the hottest rockin' album of the month is on... *Alternative Tentacles*? Straight-up garage a la the Makers or Cynics (minus the fixation on the tambourine as an instrument of male pleasure), with the operative difference being that they actually print the lyrics—and they're not about how the singer's penis is actually that of a large, fearsome, stylish wolf or anything of that nature, either. *Wacky!* What can I say? A garage album that would not sound

at all out of place taped on the back of the same cassette as you have your Knockout Pills album taped on the front of. What I find most amusing is how the songs with outright sociopolitical content—"No Beast So Fierce," "Luzerne County," "Hand to Hand"—are smirkingly reminiscent of the two—"worship"—songs—minimum that I understand performers are required to commit to before obtaining gigs at Christian coffeehouses. All the same, I can't say as I saw this 'un coming. Keen. BEST SONG: "Tender Sin," but I also really like the psychedelic "Surprise," although it kind of pissed me off that I spent so much time trying to figure out who originally did it before I saw that it was written by the drummer. BEST SONG TITLE: "491"—what can I say? Prime numbers command respect! FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: If the song "Exterminator" is, as it appears, to be about the William S. Burroughs book of the same name, my understanding is that it should end with an exclamation point. —Rev. Nørð (Alternative Tentacles)

**SHAKEDOWNS, THE:
Self-titled: CD**

Take a little Hives, thrown in some Northwestern nouveau-punk and add an Endino production and you get this. —Jimmy Alvarado (Morphius)

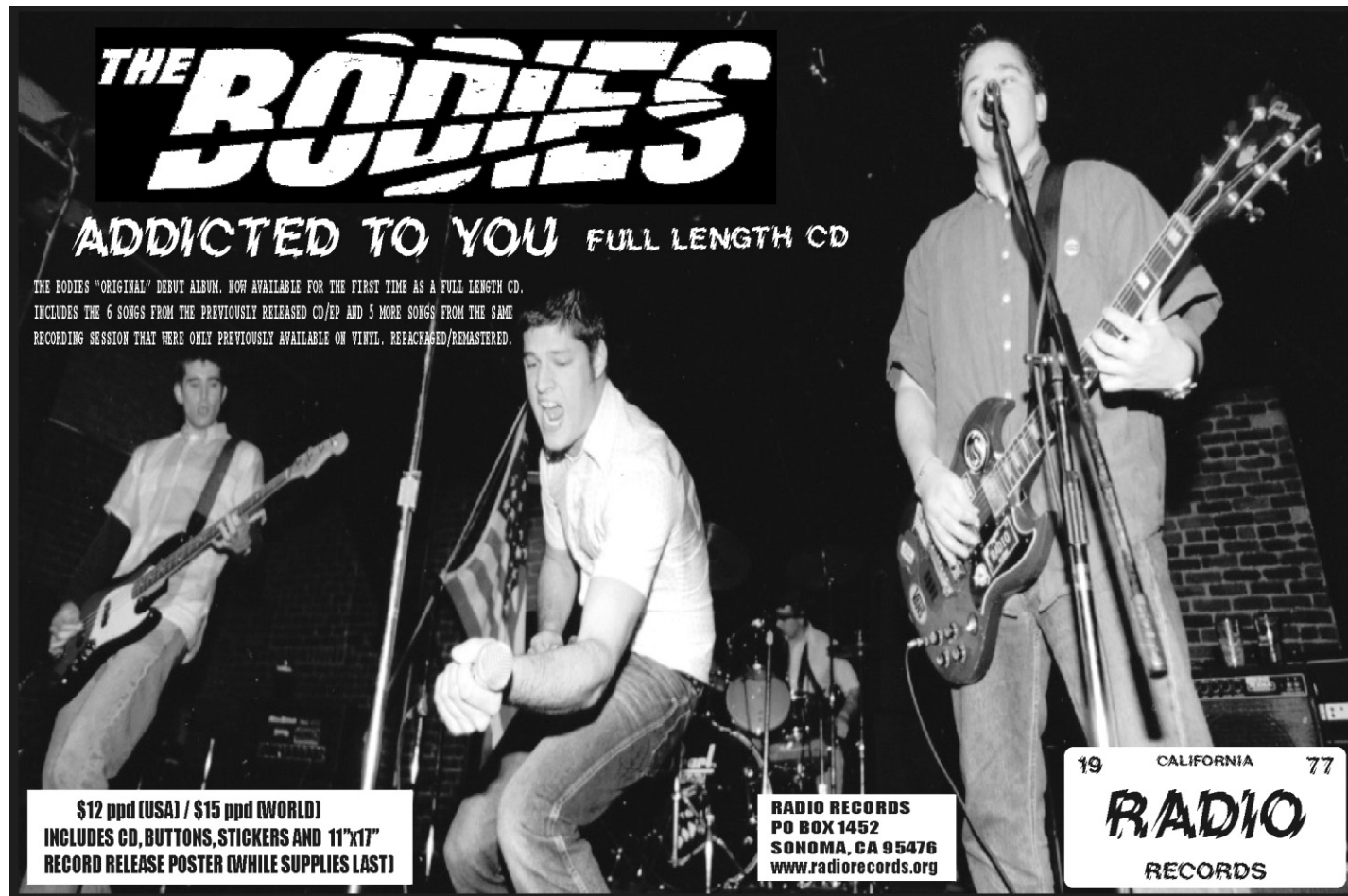
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Breakout," and "Straight Ahead" from bassist's Craig Ahead's first band of the same name). Also includes covers of The Misfits ("All Hell Breaks Loose"), Hüsker Dü ("Target") and still more Sham 69 ("Rip Off"). Despite the diversity of the material they chose to cover, somehow the band still manages to make every song sound the same. How do they do that? It must be that city water. —Greg Barbera (Fat)

SICK OF IT ALL:

Outtakes for the Outcast: CD

Here is a band that has outlasted many bands before and after them, so I am not totally offended by this in-between release. It's a collection of tracks from assorted comps, b-sides, bonuses and previously unreleased. This New York outfit should need no introductions. Being the current leaders and, to a certain degree, grandfathers of the hardcore movement, they have not strayed far from their initial formula. Play hard and make the audience feel it. I can hear this band's music from far away and nine times out of ten I can guess that it is them. If you are like me and only have bits and pieces, this will definitely add to the collection.

—Donofthedeath (Fat)

SICK56/HIGGINS ++: Split: 7"

Sick56: UK street punk in the vein of Sick on the Bus meets A Global Threat. Higgins ++: The "++" means Sick56 and they team up with some dude or band named Higgins. An updated version and parody of the Dead Kennedys *California Uber Alles* titled *Cool Britannia Uber Alles*. On the heaviest gram pink vinyl I have ever seen for a 7". —Donofthedeath (JSNTGM)

SILENCIO: Dead Kings: CD

This sounds like the Trans-Siberian Orchestra with no holiday cheer and evidence of too many John Zorn albums in their collection. —Jimmy Alvarado (The Mountain Collective for Independent Artists, Ltd.)

SKATE KORPSE:

Self-titled: 7"

I like what they're going after. 2004's answer to JFA's *Blatant Localism*, perhaps with some McRad and Clay Wheels thrown in for good measure. In other words, they want to resuscitate skate rock in its original form. (Think *Barking Trucks and Blazing Wheels*, not the soundtrack to that asshole of a movie, *Grind*.) The instrumental, "Badlands," is fantastic, but as a whole, Skate Korpse lacks the deep and fluid styles that past bands have already developed and mastered. If I saw them live and they sound like they do on record, I'd have to yell out, "More Los Olvidados in the monitors, dudes!" Decoded, that means I want it more snarling, more visceral. I want more kinky twelve-foot backyard pools to be directly in their music, not just the words they're singing. Definitely has some potential. —Todd (Punx Before Profits)

SKINTONES, THE:

Rock Scene Problem: CD

I really liked the opener, "H-Bomb," but the rest was just a little too "big rock sound" for me to pay much attention to. —Jimmy Alvarado (Crustacean)

SKITSYSTEM:

Allt E Skit: LP

You know how when your yuppie hip-

ster neighbors are having a party, and all their yuppie hipster friends want to hear some Euro dance pop, so they play it so loud that there's nowhere in your apartment where you can sit without having to hear the Euro dance pop, not even the bathroom or a closet, and you need something to drown it out? Skitsystem is perfect for occasions just like that. Hammering, furious Swedish hardcore that nods to traditional Swedish hardcore bands but definitely forges its own sound. This is a compilation of older releases, and they've only gotten better since then. —Josh (Havoc)

SLAUGHTERHOUSE FOUR,

THE: Broken Hearts

and Broken Strings: CD

Weak, flat punk with weak, flat vocals.

—Jimmy Alvarado

(www.slaughterhousefour.com)

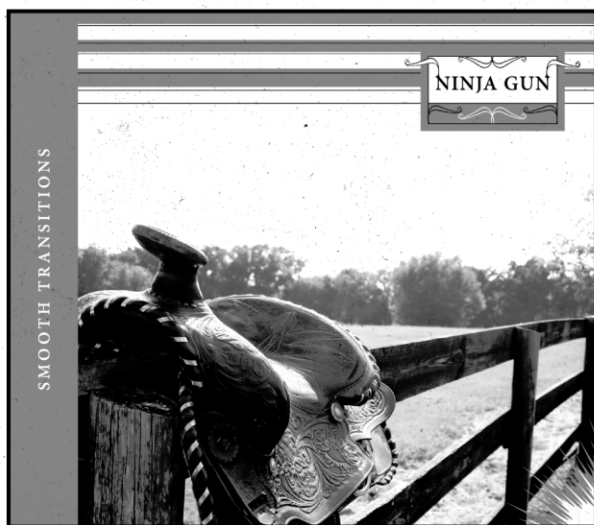
SNAKE, THE CROSS,

THE CROWN, THE:

Mander Salis: CD

This album is nothing if not ambitious—combine the soaring vocals of Radiohead's Thom Yorke or Jeff Buckley and Elliott's instrumental experimentation and you'll have an idea of some of the reference points. It's a headphone record in the best sense of the term; this album rewards people who own a good pair and can hear the nuances and subtleties, yet still sounds awesome on a cheap pair of speakers. The problem with this record is that while it's ambitious and more musically complex than the average indie band, it doesn't actually sound that different. While I wish I could take it on its own merits as a single work, it's hard because the album sounds

young—it's not that these songs are immature so much as they are bursting with ideas, some of which seem incompletely expressed, sketches of musical brilliance which don't necessarily last long enough to indicate whether more rewarding material lay further along down that path. Likewise, the lyrical content is all about transcendence, transformation, overcoming—the big stuff that more mature bands seem to forget as they grow older and try to describe how lives become more complex and more difficult to explain. These lyrical themes are more commonly the province of younger, less experienced and more earnest bands which haven't yet been given sufficient opportunities to find themselves as jaded and detached as characters in a Richard Ford novel... or have somehow managed to side-step that loss of innocence and hope. I suspect that's part of the reason why bands don't (and, arguably, shouldn't) last forever—the language required to describe youth is fundamentally different from that which is required to describe the transition from youth to middle age; trying to speak the old dialect seems foolish and the new one simply doesn't translate with any significance. I recognize the language spoken here, much as I recognize Spanish being spoken after a few years away from California and several years after speaking it in any meaningful way; I can piece together what is being said here even though my conjugations are rusty, even though I don't remember as much of the vocabulary as I used to. With all that said, even though fans of the aforementioned artists will probably find much here to like—and I've spent quite a bit of time appreciating this record as



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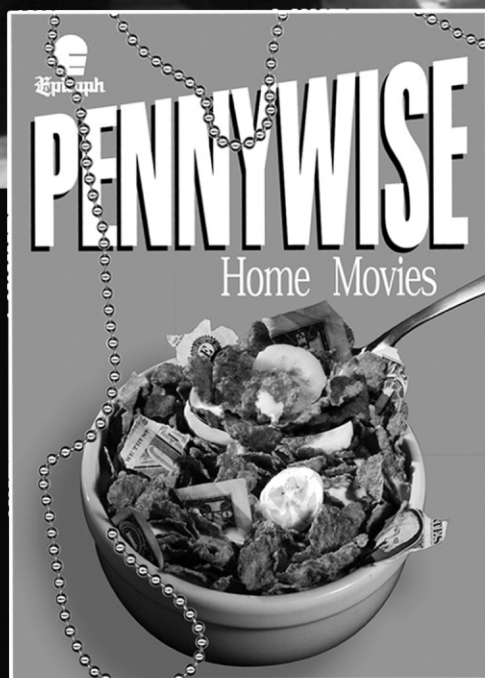
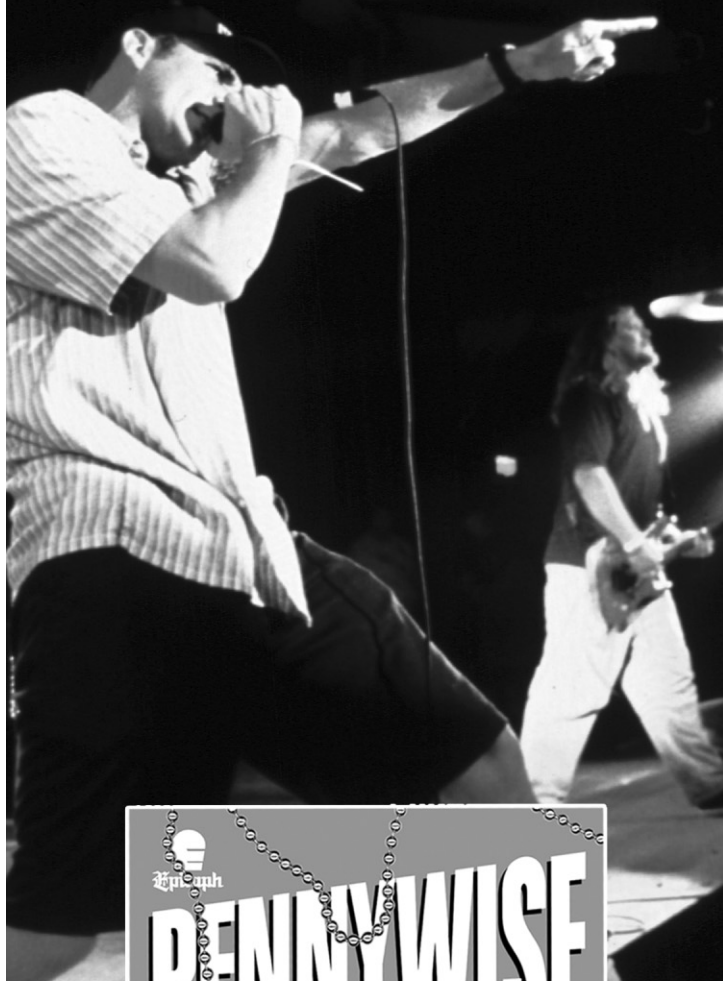
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well—I'm curious whether the next album will show further progress and additional exploration of the more interesting musical ideas expressed here (much as Elliott's *False Cathedrals* was leagues beyond *U.S. Songs* in its complexity and depth) or whether it will also suggest other directions that might have yielded more curious fruit. —Puckett (Equal Vision)

SNFU: *In the Meantime and in Between Time*: CD

I was worried a little when I heard about a new SNFU record coming out. How could I possibly avoid being biased? I mean, this band was pretty much responsible for my punk rock existence. How would I take it if this didn't live up to their near flawless back catalog? I can handle a lot of other bands losing their luster, but the mighty SNFU? I was nervous. To put it bluntly, this record kicked me square in the ass! I was not expecting to be blown away but I sure was. I can honestly say that this new record captures everything that an SNFU should be. Tight rhythms? Check. Soaring guitars? Check. Mr. Chi Pig? That's a big CHECK! No one can write like he writes. It's like when an abstract painting suddenly makes sense. No matter if he's writing about his own issues, or about those around him, you know that it's going to be clever and biting. Musically, the band has really come together. The new rhythm section fits in perfectly. The songs somehow maintain the SNFU feel while managing to sound fresh. There are many bands from the "glory days" of hardcore that continue to play today. The numbers are thinner when you count the ones that are still viable. I am happy to report that SNFU, aka "The Most Important Band in the History of the World According to Ty" are more than viable. They're still the best! —Ty Stranglehold (www.snfu.com)

SOCIAL DISTORTION: *Sex, Love and Rock'n'Roll*: CD

I approached the new Social D album hesitantly, as if it were a historical lover returning to town. Turning the album over in my hands, I ruminated. What was it like last time we met? Should I bother calling? Would it be the same? Would I feel that old familiar flame? I'd heard he'd been successful, become iconic, reached all his worldly goals. News of his return had reached fever pitch across town. Had it gone to his head? The artwork and the titles are so quintessentially the "new RAB revolution." I scoffed and rolled my eyes. Maybe it was me. Maybe I was the one who had changed. I set it aside, disaffected. He had gone soft, an old pander. Pangs of guilt plagued me. My anger surprised me. For over fifteen years, that voice, those lyrics, and that guitar had been the only thing that could rid me of life's little aches and pains. About a week after dismissing the album, I fell on some hard times and reached for my cure-all—I put that album back on, turned it up and was sustained. All is as it was and as it should be. Don't mistake the painfully optimistic song titles ("Reach for the Sky," "Live Before You Die," "I Wasn't Born to Follow") for glibness—Ness has traded his anger, remorse, spite, hate, self-loathing and pain for insightful satisfaction, stability and self-acceptance. Some things have happened in his heart, mind and soul since

the band's last studio release in 1997. Musically and lyrically, it sounds just like Social Distortion should—merely humbled and faithful instead of reckless and dejected or full of self-pity. One of many examples: "I triumphed in the face of adversity and I became a man I never thought I'd be. And now the greatest challenge is this thing called love, I guess I'm not as tough as I thought I was." In my mind, I've been asking him to marry me since I was thirteen... I wonder if he'd accept now that we're both grown-ups? —Jessica T (Time Bomb)

SOMETHING ABOUT VAMPIRES AND SLUTS: *We Break Our Own Hearts*: CD

Art, minimalist, drum machine-propelled art pop. Resulted in a resounding "eh." —Jimmy Alvarado (Morphius)

SOPHOMORE YEAR, THE: *You Are Here... She Is There*: CD

Strike one: The utterly lame band name. Strike two: Contains a song entitled "Heartsick." Strike three: Three of the four members start off their "thank you" list with "God." The music: an embarrassingly weak fly into über-suckass emo-popland. You guys are outta here. —Jimmy Alvarado (Search and Rescue)

SOUND OF DISASTER: *Lagar Och Forordningar*: 7"

Some people may call this a fan club release. Some may even call this a bootleg. But what I could gather through the rumor mill is that this is a semi-legitimate release that had the blessing of one of the actual band members. So the story goes that an influential member of this legendary Swedish band did not want this 1983 demo to see the light of day, but an eccentric record collector had made contact with another member of the band and secured a copy with his blessing. So a gem has been unearthed and has been given life once again. All thirteen songs are contained here from the original demo. It has the distinctive early '80s Swedish buzz saw sound of bands from that time period. What may be construed as thin production recorded on a boombox constructs itself as an original sound and distinctive attack. At the time, you knew that this was definitely not from America. The first time I had heard bands like this twenty years ago, I knew I was hearing something special and different. It is so hard to recreate an era like this. I believe this has already gone out of print but many copies are still lingering around many mailorder distros. So if early Swedish hardcore is your thing, do some research and find a copy. —Donofthedeath (Georg Becker Schallplatten, No Address)

SPEND 4: *AYAYAYAYAAAAA!!!!!!: 7"*

Wow. Have I just discovered the Japanese equivalent of the Grabbies?!? Holy shit. There are so many Japanese bands that I like—Guitar Wolf, Teengenerate, Crucial Section, Sweet J.A.P., Coastersride, Thug Murder—that I got my hopes up as soon as I saw that these gents hail from the Land of the Rising Sun. But this is way fucking better than I was allowing myself to hope for. Slashing, frenetic, swarming, unrelenting walls of amplified rage that you can fall in love with upon first listen. Ye Gods, as Hunter Thompson

might say, this is a motherfucking scorch. —Aphid Peewit (Acme)

STAGGERS, THE:

The Sights, The Sounds, The Fear, and The Pain: CD

I love it when a band confounds expectation. The Stagers are primarily—for lack of a better term—rockabilly punk. They sway. The bass is prevalent and jumpy. The singer can croon and hold a note. Although it's obvious he's not aping Glenn Danzig, an argument could be made that his vocal stylings are similar. Some of them have high triangle haircuts. I was all ready to listen to a band from a limited universe that's listened to Tiger Army and the Reverend Horton Heat and regurgitate stories about hot rods, Betty Page, and burning rubber. Or maybe someooky graveyard stuff. How wrong I was. Shame on me for pegging 'em before pushing play. They pump new life into rockabilly by using it as a springboard to cannonball into a new pool of ideas. They pull off a great western-themed instrumental. They cover Masters of the Obvious' song, "Primeval," fuckin' spot-on (which is super hard, figuring on the damage quirk pop to rockabilly conversion charts are a bitch to compute). And the clincher? They take lyrics from the great kid's book *Where the Sidewalk Ends* and make it a song I want to hold a beer over my head and shout along to. An unexpected, fun, and cool surprise. Also includes a soulful, enjoyable campfire acoustic set and three videos. —Todd (Haunted Town)

STALINS WAR:

Rebirth from Flames: CD

I had a feeling that this was going to be

an emo release. Something about the way the cover looked. But my intuition was wrong on this one. I know this is not an inventive description, but they sound like Kittie meets Shadows Fall and Good Riddance. It's metallic hardcore that is piercing with precision and powerful in delivery. The vocalist, Moana Strom, has a deceptively beautiful voice that is almost romantic in its beauty, but can turn on you with her shrieking vocals bursts. The production on this recording is top notch. The only thing missing is the double bass drumming. (Not to say that the drumming is mediocre. It's not.) By addition, it would further enforce the music they are producing. —Donofthedeat (Un-Fun)

STAR STRANGLER

BASTARDS: Red, White and Dead: CD

Wow, did these guys move to Norway or something??? Don't remember their last album being this heavy. We're talking "Negative Approach covers Discharge" kinda heavy here, the result sounding reminiscent of both Out Cold and pretty much the entire Scandinavian region. This is gonna stay in my player for quite a while, partly because it's so damned good, but mostly 'cause I'm afraid it's gonna up and kick my ass if I get too close to it. —Jimmy Alvarado (Rodent Popsicle)

STOCKYARD STOICS:

Catastrophe: CD

This is in the take it or leave it pile. Very Rancid-like in their sound. Street punk mixed with some ska overtones. They play well and their songs are catchy. But nothing exactly won me over. —Donofthedeat (Bankshot)

STRIKE ANYWHERE:

To Live in Discontent: CD

The impact of this CD is somewhat lessened for me, having lucked into *Chorus of One* shortly after its release in 2000 and also having the songs on the 7" that Fat released. And then listening to both of them for years on end. But if you've never heard of Strike Anywhere (who were on the cover of *Razorcake* #9) or just have the albums, it's definitely a treat to be able to pick up some rarities, extras, and covers in one big scoop. In a time and place where smart political punk that confronts and investigates the world around us in ways that are valuable and meaningful (instead of just "Fuck the Man," "Kill the Pigs,") Strike Anywhere is a rare commodity. It's great to see beyond a shadow of a doubt that their music isn't as perishable as a flavor of the month and hasn't become dated in four years. It's a testament to how considerable the band really is. The music? Fucking awesome. Anthemic in the best sense, where heart is directly translated into soaring guitars, pummeling drums, and Thomas' unmistakable voice. They're one of those far-too-few bands where their integrity and message is matched by how powerfully their songs are actually arranged and played. This release also includes three covers (Dag Nasty, Gorilla Biscuits, and Cock Sparrer), an unreleased track from their *Exit English* session, and a song from their first demo. Highly recommended. —Todd (Jade Tree)

SUBMISSION HOLD: What Holds Back the Elephant: CD

These female vocals are trying way too

hard to be pretty. Somehow it reminds me of Zounds. Of course, that is if Zounds became a terrible hippie indie rock band. The bass guitar thumps through tracks and the guitar melodies carry along so redundantly they still can't compensate for the art they are blatantly failing to create. I can imagine their shows having interpretive dancing, incense, and mimes. Vegan mimes. The songs' lyrics are translated into three different languages—which is a spectacular idea—but whatever language, it isn't my cup of tea. —Gabe Rock (G7 Welcoming Committee)

SWEET J.A.P.:

I'm Only Moonlight/Found There "No Go": 7"

Had to do a little research to see what this band is all about. First off, this is a Japanese band transplanted to Minneapolis. Interesting choice. I see they are compared to Teengenerate, Registrators and Guitar Wolf, all of whom I have never listened to but have heard of the names. So here I go again and have to do this going in blind. Noisy, buzz filled, dirty three-chord rock mixed with a punk nastiness. The songs are a mixture of '60s garage punk toughness and yet they still paint a fun-filled ride. Glad they didn't go for the low-fi sound because the power would have been lost. I also like the fact that the songs seem to be barely over a minute each. With such a small dose, you feel like you need more to finally reach your high. —Donofthedeat (Dirtnap)

SWIMS:

Snackfood Junction: CDEP

It's in a 7" sleeve and the label says "CD Version Included" but there's no

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record. Weird, huh? Almost as weird as the pencil-and-marker artwork. The music however isn't all that weird; just standard pop-psych-garage fluff. Nice but not necessary. —Cuss Baxter (Prison Jazz)

SWITCH, THE: *Surviving the Transition: CDEP*

The first release from this Long Beach-based band. It consists of former members of Madison Bloodbath and Midway. It's very solid and tight and leans toward comparisons of Jawbreaker, Samiam, or Knapsack, although vocally it's more grainy. Every song has a buildup or breakdown. Lyrically, there's a sense of reflective optimism through years of failure. I'm glad to see this band around. They rule. —Buttertooth (Something in Ohio)

SYZSLAK: *Destroy the Light: 7"*

Hyper sludgemetal of the highest class, and by a threesome, no less. I don't remember them standing out on the label's recent *Genrecide* compilation, but I must have had my whole ass in my face if that song was anywhere near as goat-getting as this set. Five songs, clear vinyl, guitar man looks like a Vulcan, bass lady is a lady, "Shove your tie up your ass." —Cuss Baxter (Worlddeater)

TAKEDOWNS, THE: *Self-titled: 7"*

I was gonna be a smartass and bad-mouth this just 'cause they were local boys, and there's nothing we punkers from the 'hood like to do more than cap on each other for shits 'n' giggles, but I just can't quite bring myself to do

it. Not because I'm incapable of doing it, mind you, 'cause I could swear a blue streak about damn near anything if I had the gumption, as evidenced numerous times over the course of this mag's existence, but because it's good. Really good. We're talking "boy, them elitist Hollywood fucks would've been green with envy had this come out in '77" kinda good. The lyrics and hooks are kept simple, the THUD factor is upped exponentially and the attitude is cranked to eleven, resulting in some kick-ass tunes sure to spoil your mama's quinceañera. Even more impressive is that they've managed to pack nine tunes on a seven-inch, and these are not short songs, mind you. Of course, I'm gonna call 'em and tell 'em this wasn't bad for a group of tone-deaf amputees with more Justin Timberlake singles in their collection than most people should legally own, but, just between you and me, this is probably the best record I've heard in quite a while. —Jimmy Alvarado (Bridgecityrockerrrecords@yahoo.com)

TARANTULA HAWK: *Self-titled: CD*

For some weird reason, I've really been loving doomy prog metal lately (even though I'm still not too interested in Neurosis) and this is in the same dark vein. Epic, droning dirges that sound like marching orcs in the *Lord of the Rings*—yeah, that may have sounded kind of lame but these plodding songs are spooky, filled with keyboards that sound like they came straight out of *Phantom of the Opera*. They're filled with dread, not the vague suspicion that something bad might happen sooner or later, but the absolute certainty that everything is

going to be very fucked in short order. They have a tribal, almost jazz-like, groove at times, all syncopated drumbeats and what sounds like the metal equivalent of snare drum chatter. With all that said, this may actually be too well-produced for doom metal fans (the sound isn't murky and this album doesn't seem to have been recorded through a tin can) but may not sound clear enough for Dream Theater fans. However, to my ears, this sounds damned cool and I can't wait to hear more. —Puckett (Life Is Abuse)

TAXI: *Who's to Blame b/w Down by Love: CD-R version of a 7"*

The more I listen to this the more I loathe it utterly: The a-side is the kind of pointless midtempo pseudopunk that used to be held up as a shimmering example of the genre by MTV™ and similar overground know-nothings when they tried to advance a theory that the Hair Metal Of The Day was merely "Punk plus X!" (buy into that at your own peril, kids); the b-side might fit somewhere onto the end of one of the first few UK Subs albums were it outfitted by Charlie Harper's vocals, but, alas, it is merely outfitted with the presumably unintentionally goofy vocals of some Italian guy singing *en Anglais*, so cross that one off your Christmas list as well. Seriously, if this is what's supposed to pass for good punkrock in this day and age, the enlightened consumer might wanna think about taking a few years off from punk-dom and using that time to explore previously unscratched itches involving exploration of the classical, jazz, or techno realms. I mean, there certainly ain't

nothin' to see here. BEST SONG: "Down by Love" BEST SONG TITLE: "Stone Age Woo" by Nervous Norvus FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: As a final indignity, I didn't even get the vinyl to review, just a CD-R. *Are there not rules in place to keep me safe from such horrors???* —Rev. Nørb (Dead Beat)

THESE ARMS ARE SNAKES: *The Lion Sleeps When Its Antelope Go Home: CD*

This review could alternately be called *Fuck Me, They Put Out a Full Length?*, or *Sorry Ma, I've Got More Things to Shoot At*. I could care less what bands these people used to be in; all I care about is the music. It's angular, vaguely electro-clash, post-punk-inflected pseudo-dance-rock, and that's a Dagwood of a sentence—what it boils down to is that this band plays noisy, groove-driven songs that people might dance to. Comparisons? Sure, but I didn't like Girls Against Boys either. —Puckett (Jade Tree)

THESE ARMS ARE SNAKES: *The Lion Sleeps When Its Antelope Go Home: CD*

Arty, discordant rock in the vein of Drive Like Jehu and Gang of Four. "Angela's Secret" dissects a person who just works to exist and has no other purpose in life. "Greetings from the Great North Woods" shines a blinding light on the working class again with lines like "Daddy brought home the bacon/ the bacon was in the backyard baby." "Darlings of New Midnight" is the standout song on here. It actually has shades of Fugazi



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tucked inside—definitely not a bad thing. This record may take a few spins to get inside your head but once it does it probably won't crawl out anytime soon. —Sean Koepenick (Jade Tree)

THESE LIES: *More Than They'll Ever Know*: CDEP

Mid-tempo punk rock with a hardcore singer. Not mind-blowingly good, but it ain't bad for what it is, either. —Jimmy Alvarado (Rodent Popsicle)

THINGS FALL APART: *Self-titled*: CD

Sounds like emocore in my book. A mixture of the new Only Crime output, The Bronx or Blood Brothers. —Donofthedeatd (Crustacean)

TOILET BOYS:

***The Early Years*: CD**

Snotty, shrill, loose, lo-fi and definitely New York, this retrospective covers the band's '96-'97 releases, live performances, and a novel cover of everyone's glam favorite, "Talk to Dirty to Me." The Toilet Boys demonstrate the sound that dominated the late '90s punk underbelly with scores and scores of fantastic bands like the Registrators, the Beaters, the Stitches, and the Stiletto Boys. Visually, it's Dr. Frank N. Furter fronting the Strokes. Sonically well orchestrated but thank you, I'm full. —Jessica T (Oziz Morpheus)

TOWER OF ROME: *All Is Lost, All Is Lost, All Is Yet to Be Found*: CD

This looked so emo that I picked it up just to trash it. But things don't always work out the way you want them to. What comes out of the speakers is far from sweaters, thick glasses, and Dashboard Confessional tour shirts. It's a bombastic blend of power violence, blast beats, grindcore, and plain and simple screaming. The only emotion here is being pissed. The drummer bangs so fast, I almost mistook it for a drum machine. The guitar and bass chords are played so fast and fuzzed out with distortion that they melt into one and it becomes one big wall of white noise. The slow parts make you feel like you are being dragged in slow motion through a river of mud. You lose your equilibrium. Eleven songs in a little over nine minutes. A severe beating that you never saw coming and once it's over, you can not identify the attackers. All you can think is, what just happened? —Donofthedeatd (Hewhocorrupts Inc.)

TRAVOLTAS:

***High School Reunion*: CD**

Music which sounds like the tragic result of not-particularly-spectacular carnal knowledge of Gary Numan by the Yum-Yums. Not entirely horrible, but yet so unbearably anemic that I should be given pause to wonder if this album was not raised since birth in a veal pen. BEST SONG: Although the "song composed of staged answering machine mes-

sages" gimmick is one that pretty much ran the course of its fifteen minutes of fame about, oh, fifteen minutes ago, "Class of '88" kinda touched me because the jilted guy/condescending girl dialogue was, tragically, pretty much right on. BEST SONG TITLE: "Major Tom" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I heard that "Major Tom" song for about the first time in like fifteen years this summer at an ice cream parlor, and I was thinking how cool it would be if someone covered it... then these guys cover it in their native tongue (whatever the hell it is), and, completely overthrowing my recent tirades on how European bands oughtta sing in their native language, I find myself wishing that they'd sung it in English instead. Huh. —Rev. Nørb (Fastmusic)

TRIGGER HAPPY:

***Petrograd*: CD**

Sometimes I think Todd floats me stuff like this just to see if anything vaguely emo in sound really WILL make my head explode. Should've known something was up when I saw they were responsible for half a split with J Church. —Jimmy Alvarado (Hungry Ghost)

TYRADES:

***Incarcerated*: 7"**

For a band that laments that their instruments are "covered in failure," and members feel like quitting because people they don't know if they actually like their band, the Tyrades sound indestructible on vinyl. It's not about finesse. It's all about a snarling, gnashing, just-smart-enough, just-dumb-enough punk rock that's pretty fuckin' perfect for this dude right here. Brains + heart + genitals (there's a lady present) + hard luck + amplification, go!—it's an equation more often fucked up than not. The Tyrades tip the scales back. Everybody wins with Jenna's tough and seductive snarl, Jimmy Hollywood's "for saying you don't know how to play, you sure get a lot out of it" guitar, to Robert's vulture picking through tough meat bass, and Frankie hitting the kit like a piece of trash "disciplining" a misbehaving kid in a checkout line at Wal-Mart. Great stuff. Four songs, including a slashy Wire cover. —Todd (Die Slaughterhaus)

UPSILON ACRUX:

Volueris Avis

***Dirae-Arum*: CD**

Ornette Coleman plays Pong with Beefheart's Magic Band in Devo's basement. Goblin doodlerock. —Cuss Baxter (Planaria)

UPTOWNS, THE:

***The Beast*: CD**

Just when I thought that ska was dead enough that Tazy Phillips could start to be forgiven, this showed up in my inbox. If you must know, think Reel Big Fish. And if that wasn't bad enough, consider that most of this is a *concept* album, much like some fucked up two-tone version of *Red-Headed Stranger*. —Puckett (www.theuptowns.com)

VANISHING:

***Still Lives Are Failing*: CD**

Skronky no-wave death disco. While I'm not much of a fan of Glass Candy, this album echoes Ida No's vocal stylings while also drawing links to Siouxsie and Romeo Void (both vocally and musically). While this may sound like a record which is little more than the sum of its parts, it's substantially more—these eerie songs are filled with a creepy mood which is closer to the aesthetic sensibilities of gothic rock and early industrial music (think Bauhaus and, to a lesser extent, Throbbing Gristle in that band's more melodic moments) as well as the edgy, brittle saxophone sound best exemplified in free jazz and by James Chance. I can't help but feel that I should be dressed like a Droog, drinking laced milk in a bar lit only by black lights and filled with dry ice drifting across the floor while people wearing too much lace and velvet pull the flames down on the dance floor. —Puckett (GSL)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Bankshot! Mass

***Destruction*: CD**

A pox on Choking Victim for turning Cyndi Lauper's "Money Changes Everything" into one of the worst ska-punk songs ever put to tape! May you all get bad skin rashes for such a heinous transgression! The Paybacks deserve a good, sound ignoring for giving the world yet another unnecessary cover of Cheap Trick's "Surrender" instead of picking one of their other tunes to run into the ground (why doesn't anyone ever cover "Elo Kiddies"? That one seems like such a no-brainer to me). The rest of the bands on here are hit and miss, with Kill Your Idols and GC5 providing some high points and the Lawrence Arms, Leftover Crack (with the Distillers) and the Virus providing some low points. In all, no big whoop here, but I've heard much, much worse. —Jimmy Alvarado (www.bankshotrecords.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

***Collateral Damage*: LP**

My good friend Dustin Jak has done a lot of things for me over the years (drummed in one of my bands, been my tattoo artist) but one of the best things has to be turning me on to Hostage Records. It started with *The Hostage Situation* compilation. He gave me a tape of it for my car and that was it. I was hooked for life. Smut Peddlers, the Numbers, Smogtown, the Crowd... So many great bands all in one place! I was so taken that I wound up naming my new band after a Smut Peddlers song on the comp. The search was on for more. Finding the 7" up here in the Great White North proved to be more than a little difficult, so I relied on the compilations to keep my fix going. The next compilation was *Tower 13*, which was damn near perfect. How could they follow it up? They did what all labels should, but never do. They went out and found a whole new crop of bands. I'm



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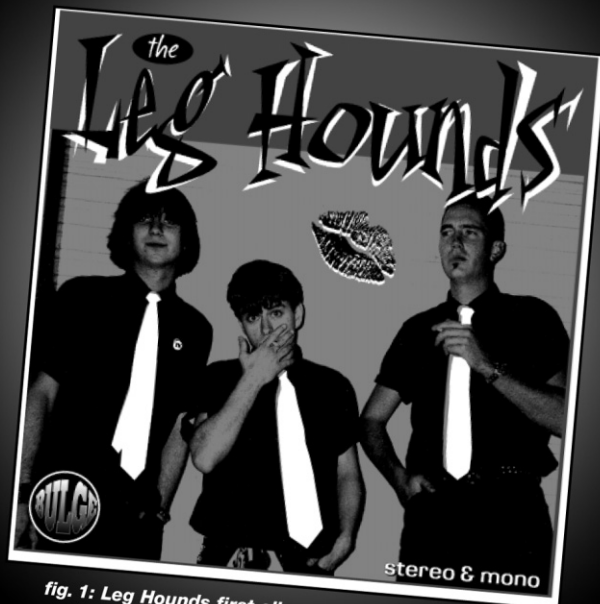


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sure it wouldn't have been too hard for them to wrangle a few tunes from their bread and butter bands (although most have broken up), but why not establish the next generation? I, for one, am sure glad they did. The record kicks off with a blast from The Bad Vibrations who let us know that beach punk is alive and well. Song after song, this comp. shows that the fertile grounds that sprouted such bands as Adolescents, DI, and Social Distortion among many others, is still producing the highest quality in punk rock. The highlights for me are aforementioned Bad Vibrations, Blood Soaked Hands, Code 4-15, Pharmacist's Son, KBH, and the Pillz... The whole damn record is gold! The bottom line is this: GET THIS RECORD NOW! Hurry and you might get one with nifty camouflage wax. I guess I owe Dustin a tape. -Ty Stranglehold: Smog City Waver #114 (www.hostagerecords.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Eighteen California Bands You Won't See on the Warped Tour: Golden Grouper, Vol. 1: CD

Essentially, GSL's answer to those horrid Punk Rock Jukebox and said Warped Tour comps that seem to, ahem, represent the underground music scene these days. This comp from Los Angeles' Gold Standard Laboratories (who brought you such fine acts as Arab on Radar, the Convocation of..., the Faint, Melt Banana, and Vaz) highlights the burgeoning California scene where punk rock is filtered through a noise rock-meets-acid rock double-chambered bong. Highlights include the keyboard-driven *skronk and twang* of New Collapse, the cosmic boogie rawk for drug-addled minds of Wires on Fire, the bass heavy P.I.L.-like post punk of Swann Danger and the Germs-meets-Alice Donut on an AmRep booze cruise (to Catalina!) of 400 Blows. And that's just the tip of the iceberg of the eighteen bands you won't see on the Warped Tour. Do people still go see bands on the Warped Tour? If so, I guess we'll have to suffer through the *Battle of the Bands That Want To Be on the Warped Tour* reality show real soon. God damn it, when will it end? I want my punk rock back and I want it now! -Greg Barbera (GSL)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Give 'Em the Boot IV: CD

I picked up the first volume of this series back when it came out because its mixture of Caribbean-inspired bands and punk-inspired bands seemed an interesting mix. When all was said and done, the only stuff on it that remained remotely interesting was a live recording of the Skatalites' "Latin Goes Ska" (which in turn was a ska take on Perez Prado's "Pachito e-Che") and a Heptones track. The "punk" rapidly degenerated into a mush of faceless faux-English fluff and the remaining ska tunes just weren't that interesting. This has been pretty much the way things have been with these comps ever since. The standout tracks here come courtesy of Westbound Train and Chris Murray, the late Joe Strummer is repped by a live version of "Junco Partner," and there is a pretty good punk track from the South Central Riot Squad, but the rest is pretty much disposable, courtesy of most of bands that made previous installments about as interesting as watching cheese melt. -Jimmy Alvarado (Hellcat)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: I Don't Want to be the One to Say It: CD

Twenty-three rough and ready tracks from a bunch of bands that I guess have been hiding out "down under" for awhile, I guess since I don't get to go to many shows there is a reason why I've never heard of them. 4 Ft Fingers belt out two songs that burn like fresh brats on the grill—quick and tasty. How could you not like a band called The Retardos? I couldn't resist their "Second Best." Love Camp 7 is tight as well—"Creature from the Black Latrine" is dark and scary. Tiltwheel reminds me of Automatic 7, but I loved that band so no problem there. Steadfast rounds out my faves on this slab 'o' rock but pick this up and you'll probably find your own new favorite band. -Sean Koeppenick (Rabbit)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Letters from the Landfill: LP

A four-way split featuring some of the best bands that the East Bay has to offer: This Is My Fist, Shotwell, Abandon, and the Peels. Not surprisingly, there's a general aspiration of East Bay greats of the past (Jawbreaker, Crimpshrine, etc.), but the enthusiasm and excitement of the bands saves them from being tied down to their influences. This Is My Fist: Earnest. Gritty. Intelligent. I'm extremely fucking stoked that they have new songs out. Their first 7" is great, and these four songs are even better. It's a hell of a nice way to kick off the album. Shotwell: There's something so familiar about these guys. Maybe it's the way they always sound hungover, like they want to play fast and yell but they never break out of their midtempo sneer. It's much better than I make it sound. Abandon: Chunky hardcore that kinda falls into a rut too often for me. If I was at a show where they were playing, I wouldn't leave, but it lacks that "oh shit, I need to hear that again" quality that the first two bands on this record have. The Peels: Starts off kinda jammy, kinda solo-y, which are two qualities that I very rarely enjoy, but then it settles into a nice, comfortable weirdness. All told, I'll be listening to the first side a lot more than the second one, but I highly recommend seeking this one out. -Josh (Left Off the Dial)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Ratas de Ciudad: CD

A corker of a collection of Latino hardcore bands from Chicago's Southside, including Eske, Jodido, Tras de Nada, Non Fiktion Nois, PKDores, Reacción, and I Attack, respectively. Most of what's on here speeds by at a nice clip, is lyrically split evenly between English and Spanish, and all of it is top notch. Included in the liner notes is an explanation as to why so many Southside bands play hardcore punk, an answer that, as the product of East L.A.'s punk scene, I can attest is pretty universal. I hope the label makes this an annual "state of the scene" report of sorts for the Southside, with maybe an expansion in the number of bands represented, 'cause, as Los Crudos illustrated some time ago, the scene in Chicago's barrios was apparently quite vibrant, indeed, and apparently remains so. -Jimmy Alvarado (Southkore)

VESTIGES: The Promised City: CDEP

Folks, I do believe an alt-pop renaissance is at hand. Hide the liquor, shut

down the bars, and batten down the hatches, 'cause it looks like it's gonna be a mighty ugly storm. -Jimmy Alvarado (www.particleaccelerator-records.com)

VICTIMS: ...In Blood: CD

Some utterly vicious hardcore is dished up piping hot for ye, courtesy of this Swedish thrash powerhouse, who take Discharge's lyrical sparseness and marry it to a sonic bulldozer that touches, but by no means relies, upon the aforementioned band's sound. Yet another reason to love fjords and perpetual daylight. -Jimmy Alvarado (Havoc)

VILLAINS, THE: Crime of Life b/w Reflexive Paranoia: 7"

The Villains are Boston's future-core punk kings, or so says the little flyer that accompanied this record. I have no idea what means. Future-core? Egad, they don't mean sci-fi punk rock, do they? Ray Bradbury and hardcore don't seem like that good a mix, to me. If by "future-core" they mean the sound of punk to come (to paraphrase a Refused album title) then the future's gonna sound a lot like the past and much of the present. This is decent, fast-moving, energetic hardcore, but it isn't anything new by any stretch of the imagination. But that look with the camo pants and the bullet belt and the locked chain necklace, now there you might be onto something.... -Aphid Peewit (FNS)

VOLCANIC, THE: Nothin' for You: CDEP

Trashy rock'n'roll, Aussie style. It

ain't bad, but it ain't burning the barn down or nothing neither. -Jimmy Alvarado (Out of the Loop)

WEEGS, THE: Meat the Weegs: CD

Skronk rock that sounds like it was concocted from a brew of early Pere Ubu, Birthday Party, a healthy helping of no wave and maybe just a pinch of death rock for color. A beautiful example of its ilk, but it's kinda annoying trying to figure out song titles. A "secret track" explains how the Beatles' infamous "butcher baby" cover was an idea actually stolen from the Weegs and faults a "total Beatle eclipse" (begun when Paul McCartney was killed and an imposter was put in his position) as the cause for Bush's election, terrorism and 9/11. A triple bill featuring Lost Sounds, Melt Banana, and these guys would no doubt be one harrowing experience. -Jimmy Alvarado (Hungry Eye)

WHISKEY SUNDAY: Maldecido: CD

Vocals can make or break a band for me, and I understand it's completely a matter of taste. I have a hard time listening to bands that have lead singers whose voices sound like a speaker about to rip. Maybe because it's a sound I attribute to mechanical failure? Dunno. Anyhow, I instantly took a shining to the instruments in Whiskey Sunday's songs. They've got a great balance of being both open and anthemic—creating a big atmosphere—while still pounding a song along with a nice velocity. It's that type of non-flashy dual work that helps make Leatherface so great. They're

also multi-limb catchy. I'll catch myself tapping a toe while nodding my head, a sure sign there's more than something simple and derivative going on. After listening to this ten times, the lead singer's voice is bothering me less, and I've heard instrumental flashes of Pegboy and Hot Water Music. Includes the instantly standout track, "The Laughing Academies," with Annie of This Is My Fist! belting out the duet vocals. -Todd (1-2-3-4 Go!)

WITCH HUNT: ...As Priorities Decay: LP

A black bowel cake of hate and misery, slathered with a heavy frosting of vituperation and sprinkled decoratively with screamy, raw-toned vocals—both male and female. Comes in an attractive box festooned with Winston Smith style cut-and-paste graphics that seem to portray the rich white men currently presiding over our nation as sinister buffoons. Because of my innate inability to stay serious for more than a few minutes at a time, it's nothing I'd make a steady diet of. But really, what's not to like? -Aphid Peewit

WITCH HUNT: EPs & Crucial Chaos Radio Session: CD

Pretty pedestrian female-fronted anarchy-core. Although they are quite proficient at what they do, and their subject matter is on point, I was kinda hoping for a little more than they deliver here. -Jimmy Alvarado (Profane Existence)

WIVES: Erect the Youth Problem: CD

Fuck promo CDs. Double-fuck the

shitty chaotic screamo ones. -Puckett (Cold Sweat, no address given)

WORLD WAR IX: Panic Attack: CD

Dummy thud punk a la the Spits sans the wit. Some of it's not bad; some of it's not particularly memorable. -Jimmy Alvarado (www.eliseil.com)

YEAR FUTURE: The Hidden Hand: CDEP

Featuring ex-members of the VSS, Angel Hair, the Pattern and Blackfork (oddly enough, listing former bands is also the bullshit way to start a record review), Year Future makes a relatively noisy and angular racket. It's defiantly political—critiquing perception and complacency with all the grace of a sawed-off shotgun. For the most part, it's relatively similar to contemporaries like the Blood Brothers. It's also relatively bland and forgettable. -Puckett (GSL)

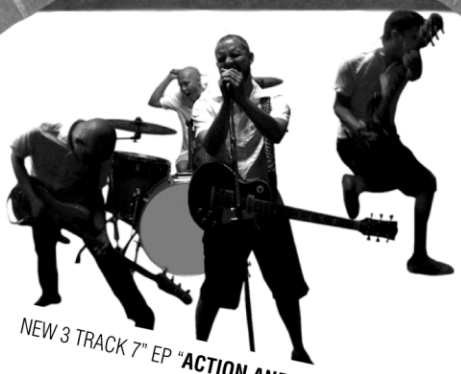
YOU'RE NEXT: Pushing Forward: 7"

Early Hogan's Heroes comes to mind here, which means the beats are fast, the lyrics are shouted, and the mood is angry. -Jimmy Alvarado (High Fidelity)



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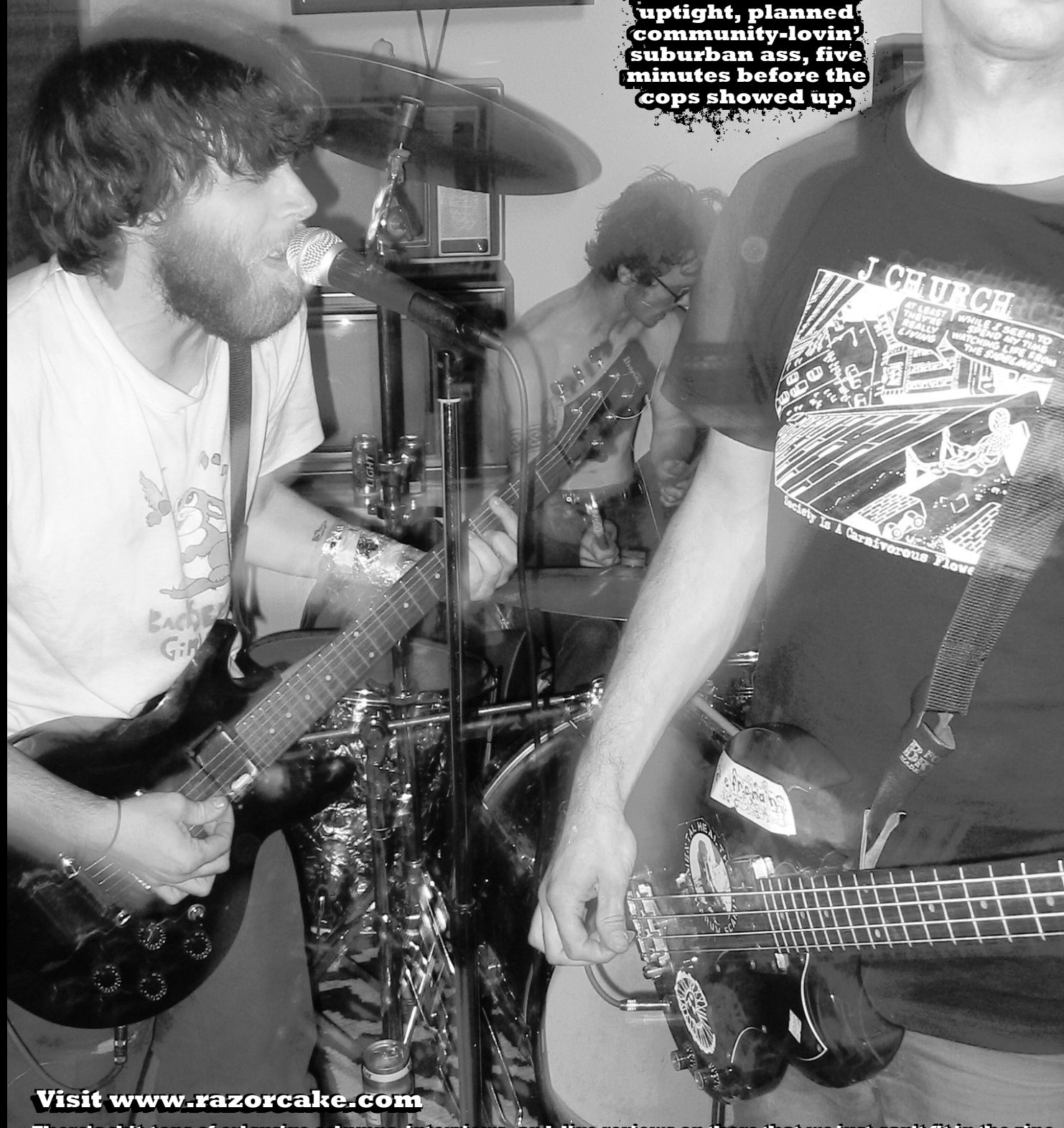
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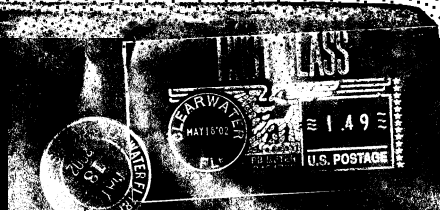


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CONTACT ADDRESSES

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- **Alternative Tentacles**, PO Box 419092, SF, CA 94141
- **Armpit Toast**, 211 Coventry Crescent, Fredericton, New Brunswick, E3B 4P4 Canada
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- **Bankshot**, <www.bankshotrecords.com>
- **Barracuda Sound**, PO Box 11994, Gainesville, FL 32604
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- **Blankmind**, 28 Jenny Wren Dr., Martinsburg, WV 25401
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ACCIDENTAL PORNOGRAPHY: THE WILLAMETTE FREE

VOICE, #1, \$2, 4 1/4 x 5 1/2, photocopied, 24 pgs. Published by a group calling themselves "Freaks and Geeks," and consisting of contributions from various members of the Willamette University community, *Accidental Pornography* is a very entertaining zine. There are how-to's on being subversive, and on operating a "Dare Program"—not the one your local police department runs to convince kids not to do drugs, but an organized sort of game consisting of doing variously embarrassing things in public, like wearing underwear on your head for an entire day. There's also some short fiction, a story about a local band, some poetry and artistic photography. It's not perfect—the rant page contains so many misspellings and grammatical blunders that you wonder how the writer even got out of high school, never mind getting into Willamette University. But overall, it's a fun read. —Brian Mosher (Ryan Rogers, 1343 Saginaw St., Salem, OR 97301)

AVOW #18, \$2, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, photocopied, 27 pgs. It's usually a bad sign when a zine begins with a disclaimer. In this case, Keith writes on page one, "This could be the worst piece of shit I've ever laid on the glass of a copy machine..." Despite that premonition, he went ahead and wasted a bunch of toner on punk meanderings that stain the pages of lesser zines. We've come to expect more from *Avow*, more than just clichéd essays about how awesome everything would be if people stopped treating punk as fashion. Let's settle this now, mohawks in 2004 isn't going to cause any social change. Now let's move on. Then when I've just given up on Keith, resigned to the fact that this was an off issue, I read the last essay, "A Stone Thrown in the Water." It's a moving piece about who he once was, who he is now, and the idea of hope. Hope kept me reading the entire issue, even when I thought nothing could save it, and then hope rewarded me with one of the most thoughtful essays on growing up and getting on and all the shit you have to muck through. —Amy Adoyzie (Keith Rosson, 1631 NW Everett #401, Portland, OR 97209)

BAD EGG, #1, Free if you find it, 3 stamps or trade, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, copied, 34 pgs. The first line in this zine sums it up quite tidily. "Your source for out-dated contest results, grainy photos, and obscure skaters." It's a self-effacing, cleanly laid out, and quick-to-read skate zine put together

by some folks whose love of transition and pool skating is undeniable. (They do try to accept many other forms of skating, describing tight slalom quite effectively as "The movement required for this activity is something akin to hula-hooping at warp speed. These guys were hauling ass, but it did look kind of silly.") What ratchets this one up a couple notches: the photos were actually great, considering the limitations of photocopying, and the interviews with Tim Kerr (who rightly laments the lack of ditches in current skateparks) and Captain Sean Doe of Throw Rag in shiny itty-bitty underwear. Cool. —Todd (Bad Egg, 833 E. 14th Ave. #303, Denver, CO 80218)

BARRACUDA #20, \$3.50, 8 1/2 x 11, 48 pgs. Of all the detestable things in this world that I continue to do battle with, one of the more vile forces to show up on my radar screen in recent years is the ultra-slick, über-consumerism cum girlie magazine; aka: *Maxim*, *Stuff*, *FHM*, et al. These shameless shills for the reptilian merchants of the commodity-oriented lifestyle have taken an art form I have long considered sacred, namely the "girlie mag," and forced it into a shotgun marriage with the zealous spendthrift mindset/way of life. And it all oozes with a "if you don't buy into this attitude we're shoving down your throat, you're a total loser" self-righteousness that borders on the evangelical. It's little more than an orgy of life's superficialities, air-brushed and sensuously lit and all swaddled in a fuzzy blanket of dumbed-down info/hypno blurbs and smarmy "lifestyle" tips. Just so many glossy, tantalizing pages of a microwavable a-spirituality built on commodification, superficiality and livin' la vida loca. It makes my skin crawl. So thank god for publications like *Barracuda* who are taking back the beautiful, objectified female form and exalting it a magazine that is something more than just a packet of splashy ads for high-end, high-tech toys. Along with the eye candy of beautiful bikini-clad models—including porn starlet Tera Patrick—this issue features a comprehensive article on "real man" Evel Knievel's stunts of derring-do and a detailed how-to article on making your own beer (which, by the way, I've never understood why it is that so few so-called "DIY" punks make their own beer and, instead, happily pay big corporate brewers to make their beer for them... weird.) And it's all done with a kitschy retro feel that blends elements of hot rods, rockabilly, tiki bars, tattoos, and cocktail lounges. Not too hip, not too tongue-in-

cheek, *Barracuda* manages to come across as a modern day version of a classic '50s men's magazine like *Adam*. And I'll take that over the amped-up retard rebel consumer T&A mags any day. —Aphid Peewit (Barracuda Magazine, PO Box 291873, LA, CA, 90029)

BARRACUDA, #20, \$5, 46 pages. This is a real-man's magazine. *Barracuda* comes at you with cars, girls, adrenaline adventure saga, and great lowbrow art! It is like a homage to the great age of hot rods, Big Daddy Roth, and scantily-clad hotties. This issue has an amazing article on the King of Testosterone, Evel Knievel. That's a real man, papa! There is an article on how to make beer. *Barracuda* is truly as blast from the past. The slick magazine is made to have the look of those '60 classic hot rod magazines—tiki drawings, sepia colored photos, and a center spread of a "Tropical Delight" that is awe-inspiring! I just shotgunned a beer to a scratchy Beach Boys song. *Barracuda* cuts to the bone! —Z (Barracuda Magazine, PO Box 291873, LA, CA, 90029)

BIRDLAND #1, \$2 or donation, free to prisoners, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, photocopied, 25 pgs. I was so ready to write off this zine, especially considering the fact the first two things I read were handwritten copies of works by Allen Ginsberg and Tom Waits, signed by some dude named "Pilot," like he should be acknowledged for his ability to copy someone else's poetry. It was quite confusing and boring until Walkingman's "Brakeless in America (Pt. 1)," the first segment of a road trip story, and his thoughtful anti-consumerism rant. This Walkingman dude ought to put out a zine of his own because all of the other incarcerated contributors had nothing really interesting to say. Visit *Birdland* if you wanna hang out with Walkingman and his verbose storytelling. —Amy Adoyzie (Fanorama Society Prisoner Zine Distro, 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston, RI 02905, www.fanorama.tk)

BLACK VELVET, #41, \$6, 8 1/2 x 12, glossy, 39 pages. *Black Velvet* is a fanzine, in the purest sense. It almost feels like *Tiger Beat*, except that the bands and musicians featured are not going to be appearing on the American Music Awards or the Grammys anytime soon. It's jam-packed with reviews and interviews, only of bands and records the publisher likes—which is not necessarily a bad thing. She's promoting the music she loves, and her passion is obvious. Most of the

bands are British, although the “Back Page Babe” picture is of Richie Sambora. I’m not familiar with many of the bands in here, though most of them seem to be from the metal end of the indie rock world. It’s a professional looking publication, well-written, and thoughtfully laid out. —Brian Mosher (Black Velvet, 336 Birchfield Rd, Webheath, Redditch, Worcs B974NG England)

CHINMUSIC! #7, \$4,
8 ½ x 11, 56 pgs.

The Minutemen: yes. Every issue of *ChinMusic* is good, but this one is exceptionally great because of the article on the history of the Minutemen. Don’t get me wrong, there’s tons of cool stuff to be found in here: the bizarre story of Dock Ellis, who once pitched a no-hitter while on LSD; an article about an amateur baseball league; and Mike Faloon’s excellent article about the shortcomings of the Atlanta Braves’ broadcasters (although I would like to add that one of the reasons why they’re so boring to watch is that they just sound bored with the game itself). But I was completely enthralled with the Minutemen article because, in my opinion, the Minutemen are the most important band ever. Say what you will about the Stooges, the Ramones, the Sex Pistols, or whoever you think invented punk rock, but the Minutemen were pioneers of get-in-the-van, damn-the-consequences DIY punk rock. It’s music for music’s sake; not a fashion trend or an attempt at pop superstardom, but people who have found themselves at odds with mainstream society expressing themselves in a way that the square community will probably never understand. The Minutemen changed my life the moment I first heard them, and even if you’re not a big fan or you’ve never heard them, if you’ve ever smiled at the sight of a group of oddballs plugging in and banging away at their instruments just for the sheer thrill of it all, then the Minutemen changed your life, too. So suffice it to say that I loved reading about how D. Boon and Mike Watt met and how they began playing music together. It made me forget that I would be spending the next three hours of my life in an airport waiting out my layover. —Josh (Chinmusic!, PO Box 225029, SF, CA 94122)

COFFEEBREATH, #1, \$1,
5 ½ x 8 ½, copied, 14 pgs.

Replay Dave, who put this out, is one an unassuming guy who can say a lot without many words. *Coffeebreath* is short, and on the surface, seems almost random—

appearing at first blush to be typical zine fare. Nope. In telling stories of a “mysterious bachelor,” and living underneath stairs, in seep quiet understandings that go beyond mere reaction and complaint. He understands entire situations and makes astute observations, like “Fashion does not make a good substitute for charm,” and “Bukowski isn’t always the most entertaining read, but like pissing in the yard, there’s an intangible satisfaction.” When he switches gears, overtaking his politics, it’s done with charm and real thought. Among his reasons for not wanting to put a Canadian flag on his backpack during international travel—“The taxes I pay to help build bombs are the same taxes I pay to maintain the Ocala National Forest. You won’t see me fly the flag to support the policies of Washington D.C... you also won’t see me hide behind another country’s flag as long I enjoy the fruits that trickle down from that evil.” That’s some damn good, smart stuff. Recommended. —Todd (No Idea, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604)

CONVERSATION, #1, \$4.95,

4 ½” x 5”, glossy cover,
newsprint insides, 52 pgs.

This little split between cartoonists James Kochalka and Craig Thompson reads like a koan—something that must be visited time and time again to fully appreciate what’s going on. What’s going on is a conversation between two undoubtedly talented artists looking at the core of what they do: make art. It’s a slippery slope, full of entanglements and joys. Taking snippets and removing them from their context, they sound a little high brow, but it’s not. When you read the next few sentences, imagine someone getting captured by a giant octopus next to the talk bubble. “Art is the source of power. Real life can be too dangerous and complicated, too confusing and relentless. Art gives us a way to process life, to understand it, and to gain some control over the pounding waves of experience.” Well said. —Todd (Top Shelf Productions, PO Box 1282 Marietta, GA 30061)

FLOWERS FROM THE

GRAVE, #1, 5 ½ x 8 ½, 18 pgs.

This is sobering. It’s a little photocopied personal zine with text and drawings crammed into every spare inch of space. When the author began by lamenting that a type-writer wasn’t available to him in his “little cage,” I rolled my eyes—I thought it was yet another teenaged suburbanite bitching about his absurdly privileged life. Then I realized he was serious—it’s an

inmate’s zine, one allegedly composed in solitary confinement. His jaded musings are suddenly more valid, more interesting. The handwritten text gave me a headache, but just skipping around, you’ll find stories of prison life, philosophical rants, and a clever interview with himself. The interview in particular, is brave and poignant, as the author recounts his skinhead past, the racism in his childhood home from which it arose, and his ambiguous sexuality. I never found out exactly how he landed himself in prison, but it doesn’t really matter. It seems that people must enjoy reading zines where people bitch about their lives, since they keep getting published—here’s one where the author actually has something to bitch about, and whose experience is unique enough that his perspective is valuable. —Brian Howe (Walter M. James #E-57775, D4-229-L, CSATF/SP, PO Box 5246, Corcoran, CA, 93212)

HEY, WHAT’S UP?, #4, 14 pgs.

This zine is a weird little trip into the mind of a young man from Cincinnati named Troy Gallagher. Troy seems like a nice enough guy but he may be a time bomb about to blow. Much of the fourteen pages is a confusing collage of images—important, somehow, to Troy. Maybe... is it anti-big corporation? Don’t get mad at me if I’m wrong, Troy! The zine is saved by an great interview with Glenn Danzig. Danzig and a funny rabbit cartoon! Rock, on Troy. —Z (Troy Gallagher, 1047 Lanette Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45230)

LEFT BACK, #4, 5 ½ x 8 ½,

photocopied, 72 pgs.

I almost didn’t make it past the first sentence in this zine: “As I write preparing this issue I cannot help but to recognize the abundant amounts of anger and pain along with a somber sadness that accompanies me everywhere and seemingly with everything I do.” Ah! I feel it as well. Perhaps he’s going to amplify upon this soul-crushing depression? He is! There are poems. Marvel at this stirring triplet: “Consciousness. Illness. Thought endure’s.” Maybe he’s sad because he doesn’t know how to use apostrophes (I’m not being picky—the spelling is consistently atrocious, and he plunks down apostrophes in all plural nouns). But hey, we know you’re sad—where’s the self-righteous indignation? Oh, here it is: “TASTE THE BITTER TRUTH AND HATE ME FOR IT, BUT BETTER YET HATE YOUR FUCKING SELF!!!” There are some hardcore music interviews, reviews and zine reviews too, if you can find them

amid all this venomous invective. I’ll say this for *Left Back*—it’s fucking long. —Brian Howe (Chadd Beverlin #424-439, PO Box 1812, Marion, OH, 43301)

LUMPEN, #93, free,

8 ½ x 11, 63 pages

This is a radically liberal political zine. There are a few “media” and music reviews, and the primary focus is politics and social commentary. Very professionally written, very arty and very opinionated, this is a magazine the CIA really wouldn’t want you to read. Which should be reason enough for you to get in touch with them and set up a lifetime subscription. —Brian Mosher (Lumpen, 1542 N. Milwaukee Ave., 2nd Floor, Chicago, IL 60622)

**ME AND MY BEER
AND HOW GREAT I WAS**,

\$3, 5 ½ x 8 ½, 56 pgs.

With a title like that, how could I pass this one up? The good news is that Ben Hunter comes across as somebody who’s been weaned on *Deep Thoughts with Jack Handey*, *Genetic Disorder*, *Rivethed* by Ben Hamper, and Bart Simpson. These stories are really funny and easy to relate to if you spent your childhood getting into trouble in your late teens trying to make your job a little less miserable (although I never went so far as to write “fecal disaster area” or “don’t put your hand in the hamster piss” on the walls where I worked). Ahh, the memories... —Josh (Pill Party Press, PO Box 1532, Boston, MA 02117-1532)

MEDIA WHORE #4, \$2,

6 ¼ x 8, photocopied, 30 pgs.

Reads like a newsletter on the latest haps in the kooky-crazy world of feminists! Yeah! This issue of *Media Whore* is devoted to feminist art and includes interviews with radical cheerleading squad, FATASS PDX; a “renegade feminist synchronized swimming team,” h20s; artist Chrissy Conant and her thought-provoking piece, “Chrissy Caviar”; a look into the “Sex Workers Art Show; and morezies! Oh my! —Amy Adoyzie (37 Home St., Malden, MA 02148, www.mediawhorezine.com)

PANIC ACTION #1-3,

\$1, 8 ½ x 11, 24 pgs.

This is a pretty cool zine focusing on the lo-fi, trashy rock’n’roll that (hopefully) we all know and love. I’d wager to bet that if you listen to this kind of music, you’re already familiar with the bands covered (the Marked Men, the Zodiac Killers, the Catholic Boys), but what the hell do you want for a dollar, world peace? The FM Knives

interview in #1 was the funniest thing out of all three issues, so if you can only afford one issue, that would be the one to get. —Josh (panic_action@yahoo.com)

PLEASE KILL

YOURSELF #10,

5 ½ x 8 ½, photocopied, 24 pgs.

It really takes some cahones to name your zine *Please Kill Yourself*. Just think of all the shit that reviewers could say about your little publication by just referencing the title! But I will do no such thing, not because I'm above that, but because *PKY* isn't all that bad. Rants on: tattooing etiquette, hermaphrodite embalming (!) and the yuckiness of McDonald's, the suckiness of mainstream music (yawn), and semi-amusing record reviews (stifled yawn.) Don't kill yourself hunting this one down, but check it out if it's around. —Amy Adoyzie (630 E. 14th St., Houston, TX 77008)

POOL DUST #30, \$2

(free if you can find it), 8 ½ x 11. Let's face it. Skateboarders have such an airheaded stereotype because many of them are airheads. They really do use phrases like "Rage-o-rama!" But that's not a bad thing. In fact, I like *Pool Dust* because of that. They make no effort to hide their skateboarding dialect, they just write like they talk, and if how they talk includes "rip-shredding that buck tooth coping," so much the better. It might not be grammatically correct, but it's fun to read. And it's not all "shaka" and "gnarly," either, though. There's a piece intertwining cock fighting in East Timor and the political turmoil of that region that's actually really intense. It makes me wonder how I would react if I found myself in a situation like that. On the lighter side of things, there's also the story of the Dream Destroyers that you really should just read for yourself. "Claim Pools You Can't Grind." Genius. —Josh (Chris Lundry, PO Box 419, Tempe, AZ 85280-0419)

REGLAR WIGLAR #20,

\$2, 8 ½ x 11, 96 pgs.

Picked this out of the pile because of the interview with Greg Cartwright of the Reigning Sound. I'm usually not too big on interviews written as articles because I'd rather just let the musicians tell the stories themselves, but I must say, it's a great article. The author paints a pretty thorough picture of Cartwright, from his beginnings with the Compulsive Gamblers to his days in the sun as one-third of the Oblivians all the way up to his present band. It did what a good interview should do: it made me

want to listen to the band, and in the case of the Reigning Sound, a band that I had previously dismissed. And it ends with a great quote from Greg: "There's always going to be a band that makes you say, 'Maybe I do like ska!' Or whatever kind of music you thought you didn't like." The rest of the zine holds up, as well. Lots of comics and a really funny bastardized Mad Libs, the theme of which was "College Radio DJ." Cool stuff. —Josh (Reglar Wiglar, 1658 N. Milwaukee #545, Chicago, IL 60647)

S.K.A.M. #7, \$3,

5 ½ x 8 ½, 56 pgs.

SKAM stands for "Super Kick-Ass Magazine," and while I don't know if I would call it super kick-ass, I did enjoy reading it. If you enjoy reading about recreational drug use, you probably will, too. And it's not from a degenerate, William S. Burroughs point of view at all (remember, I said "recreational"); it's engaging, like when you're drinking coffee with a friend and he tells you about what he did the night before. You laugh at the funny parts, you cringe at the embarrassing parts that make you glad you weren't there, and when he ends up holding hands with a cute girl, well damnit, it makes you feel good. One question, though: can you really get high from marigold seeds? —Josh (New Mouth from the Dirty South, PO Box 19742, New Orleans, LA 70179-0742)

SHREDDING PAPER, #18,

\$2.95, 8 ½ x 11, glossy cover, newsprint inside, 88 pgs.

Still living up to their motto ("America's Record Review Magazine"), this NorCal-based zine still finds the majority of their publication filled with reviews—and lots of them—from CDs and singles to books and DVDs. Last time I saw this rag they had some useful columns (of the political slant) and a band interview or two. I'm starting to think they should abandon everything but the reviews (in this issue it would add roughly another ten pages) and just do what they do best. The world needs a review-only publication. Trust me. —Greg Barbera (Shredding Paper, PO Box 2271, San Rafael, CA 94912)

SLUG, #189, free,

8 ½ x 11, 46 pages

You probably already know all about *SLUG* (*Salt Lake Under Ground*). They've been doing this for over fifteen years. The writing is witty and interesting, and there are about a zillion reviews, plus feature articles about life in Salt

Lake City. My chief complaint is that the print is pretty small, and sometimes the colors of the background art make it tough to read the text. Also, this particular issue has been titled "The Pirate Issue." All the staff members and contributors have taken pirate names and almost all the articles are written as if by pirates (aye, matey). It's a funny idea at first, but starts to wear a bit thin around page seventeen. —Brian Mosher (SLUG Magazine, 351 West Pierpont Ave., Suite 4b, Salt Lake City, UT, 84101)

SNAKEPIT, #10,

\$3.50 ppd., 5 ½ x 8 ½, 28 pgs.

This is cute. A pretty standard punk rock diary (typical day: go to a show, get drunk, puke, make out), but parlayed into comic strip format, with a theme song for each day, to distinguish it from the pack. The drawings are crude, but clean and serviceable. Hell, it's funnier than Mary Worth, and you know you read that shit every day. —Brian Howe (Young American Comics, 4409 Illinois St., San Diego, CA 92116)

SUGAR NEEDLE #26,

\$1 and a stamp, 4 ¼ x 11,

photocopied, 14 pgs.

You're jonezin'. You're itchin' bad. Your tongue is dry and you're mumblin' something about how you need a fix. Then *Sugar Needle* arrives in your mailbox to satiate your needs with its unabashed love of all things sweet! I have a sneaking suspicion that Corina's zine is either sponsored by the American Dental Association, the Sugar Association, or the drug manufacturers who make meds for attention deficit disorder because this girl's love for chocolates and candies knows no bounds as she taste tests candies from all over the globe. In this issue, she explores sweets she picked up at the 2004 Candy Expo, takes a tour of Seattle Chocolate, and breaks out the hard news with "Candies That Will Kill You." Reading this zine makes you wear your cavities like a fuckin' badge of honor. —Amy Adoyzie (PO Box 330152, Minneapolis, MN 55408)

THIS IS GRAND: Stories of Chicago's Rapid Transit, \$2,

5 ½ x 8 ½, copied, 28 pgs.

This Is Grand is an open-solicitation project that collects the stories of people who use Chicago's public transportation system. There's a lot to like in the brief, memorable vignettes of phantom smells, unexpected healings, yelling spurts, and random bumpings-into. The stories read much like the conversations you're apt to overhear or see your-

self in a public setting. Some of the stories are interesting, some violent, some exalting, and some are weird and inconclusive. Many things make *This Is Grand* work, but for me, what makes it great is the broad range of what's covered, which prevents it from becoming stilted or contrived. *TIG* places a nine-year-old girl's remembrance puking into her N'Sync-decorated hat while coming home from the boy band's concert in close proximity to a man daydreaming about "Star Trek" episodes and how it would be cool to work at an armadillo hatchery." *TIG* is a great slice of life zine. There's also a constantly updated website with loads more stories. —Todd (www.thisisgrand.org)

TWENTY-EIGHT PAGES LOVINGLY BOUND WITH

TWINE FLOSS, #9,

The Dental Issue, \$2,

5 ½ x 8 ½, copied, 28 pgs.

Christoph Meyer sure does love making zines and I sure do love reading his. His playful enthusiasm is everywhere in this issue, from the extra bit of floss dangling from the top hole so you can do some on-the-go-flossing, to the hand numbering of the issues (I got #414 of 648) to the enclosed smiling tooth stickers and snippet of sisal twine (that foiled his twining plans by not keeping a knot). All of that stuff would net to naught if the writing itself wasn't generous, without guile, and a pleasure to read. In this all-dental issue: Lisa Moster, real dentist and Christoph's special lady, answers a full range of dental inquiries (fluoride and floss—conspiracies by the Man?), dental fiction, dental art (one by a young patient with the word bubble reading "I won't a hug."), and dental hypotheticals (do the Amish use gas-powered drills?). All-in-all, a stellar read, which I've grown to expect with *TEPLBWFF*. —Todd (Christoph Meyer, PO Box 106, Danville, OH 43014)

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS,

#4, \$3, 8 ½ x 11, 32 pgs.

Since this mag is touted as part zine, part literary journal, it seems fair to assess it from both perspectives. As a zine, it's great. As a lit rag—not so much. Zines aren't meant to be great literature, just the opposite—they represent the passions and perspective of a certain person, niche, or scene. The short stories and poems in *Twenty-Four Hours* do just that. The best feature is the interview with LitKicks.com editor Levi Asher, who opines, "It's possible that e-books will help break the stranglehold that the major corporate pub-

lishers have on popular fiction.” While it’s true that corporate publishers sometimes reject brilliant works because they’re too outré or unmarketable, they also reject works because they just *aren’t very good*, and lack the depth, substance, and refinement to justify their publication. I’m all for avant-garde lit and populist publishing. Imprints like FC2 continue to publish adventurous, brilliant writers like Brian Evenson, while retaining the quality control factor of erudite, discerning editors. This zine seems to lack that quality control capacity—it’s riddled with typos, and the writing isn’t adventurous (i.e., there’s nothing that would scare off a corporate publisher if the stories were well crafted). In truth, most of the writing feels very young, late-teens/early-twenties stuff, where lots of gaudy swearing and violence and misanthropy stand in for craft and insight, and every story is told in the first person. I feel bad harshing on people who are just trying to get their work out, but as a reviewer, I really can’t recommend this mag if you’re looking for a profound reading experience. —Brian Howe (3456 North Hills Dr. #135, Austin, TX, 78731)

UGLY PLANET, \$3.95, odd sized, glossy cover, bound, 64 pgs. *Ugly Planet* is still sporting a the clean, crisp format and covering their self-proclaimed “diverse” subjects. Winston Smith (of Dead Kennedys album cover art fame) shows up *again*, and pieces on white girl hip hop (Northern State), multi-cultural muzak (Ozomatli) and “radical” Noam Chomsky stifle

this promising publication: it’s only the second issue and they’ve already sunk into predictable zine topics (yet still aspiring to be the next *Might* or something). I had high hopes reviewing their debut: “Very promising first effort,” I wrote. “Can’t wait to see this publication kicking ass a year from now.” Well, it’s been almost a year and my hopes aren’t as high anymore—what once was free is now sports a \$4 cover price. A slap on the back is deserved for having more pages and more ads. I hope they finally got the free-beer-at-a-Brooklyn-bar cred they were looking for by now. —Greg Barbera (Ugly Planet, PO Box 205, New York, NY 10012)

YOU IDIOT, \$2, photocopied, 55 pgs. *You Idiot* explores all the anti-drug propaganda and their ridiculous ploys to scare today’s youth from drugs. Brainchild of Minnesota native Nate Gangelhoff, this fanzine is slick, well-organized, and hip. It is jammed with tons of examples of just how out-of-touch anti-drug comics are! Pot will cause you to kill! Use a joint and you will become a zombie! In *You Idiot*’s pages, Nate takes on Crackbusters, superheroes who go around beating up drug dealers, and The Drugosaurs. Yep, using drugs will lead to extinction! There is even an article lambasting rapping wrestlers like Hulk Hogan and Randy “Macho Man” Savage. Nate brings up a good points in a myriad of creative ways, and asks, “Why, after fifty-plus years of useless propaganda haven’t they learned how to

speak to us?” —Z (Nate, PO Box 8995, Minneapolis, MN 55408)

ZISK #9, \$2, 44 pgs. You know, I used to be a Red Sox fan. I think it was that whole underdog charm that they had when I was growing up, and the fact that they had a guy named Oil Can in their lineup didn’t hurt. Somewhere along the line, they stopped trying to be a good baseball team and just tried to one-up the Yankees, and it sucked. It’s like Screeching Weasel used to say back when I was a Red Sox fan, “We become what we hate,” and it’s true. The Red Sox became the new Yankees. In a way, I’m glad they won the World Series and broke the curse and all that shit, because hopefully now they’ll get back to real baseball. I probably think about baseball too much. Anyway, this is another fine issue of a fine baseball-related zine. The article comparing the Red Sox-Yankees feud to *Pretty in Pink* was priceless, and it’s nice to read about eccentrics like A’s owner Charlie Finley (who promoted a young MC Hammer from batboy to vice-president) and Bill “Spaceman” Lee because they might otherwise be lost to history. And I guess what I like most about *Zisk* is that it simultaneously makes me think like an adult and hearken back to my childhood. —Josh (801 Eagle’s Ridge Road, Brewster, NY 10509; <gogometric@yahoo.com>)

ZISK, #9, \$2, 7” x 8 1/2”, copied, 46 pgs. I’ll let you in on a little secret. Although *Zisk* covers baseball, it’s a disservice to call it merely a

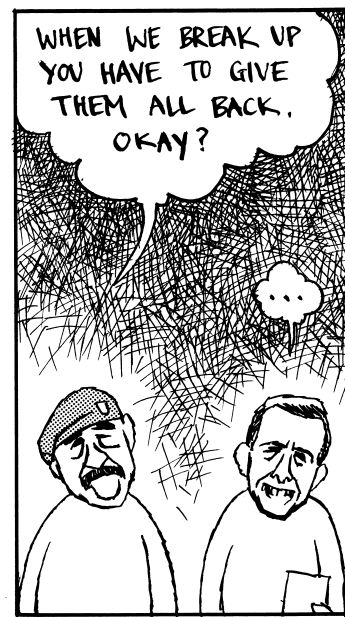
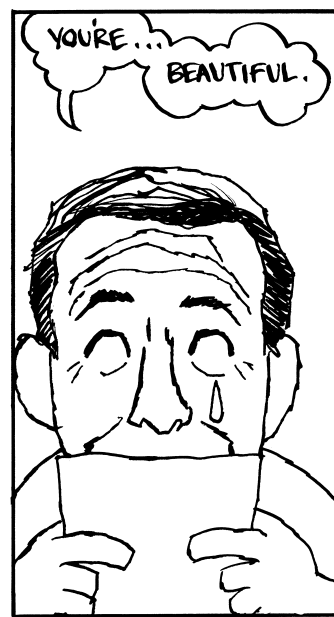
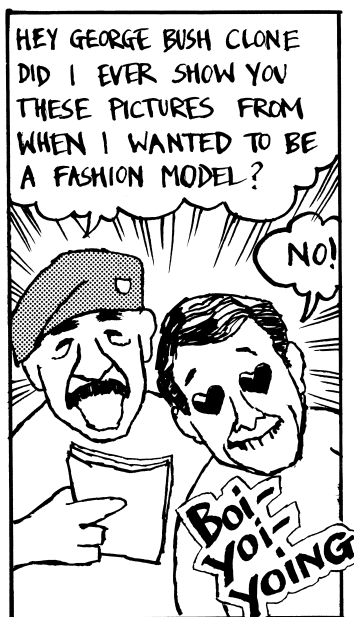
“baseball magazine.” It’s a zine put out by people who love baseball so much, they use it as a lens to refract other elements of life through it. How do I know? I’m not really that interested in baseball. I’m definitely not 46 pages worth of interested in it, but I read *Zisk* cover to cover. Same as *ChinMusic*. Why? It’s well written, and much in the same way I look at so many things through the prism of music, I really enjoy reading stuff by people with a deep, different knowledge bases. That way, I learn something new, like when a Yankee fan and a Red Sox fan parallel their respective teams’ histories via the plot and resonance of *Pretty in Pink*. In the original script, Duckie ends up with Andie, but “test audiences were creeped out by the ‘correct’ ending because they felt it implied... ‘class warfare.’” (They go on to argue that Blaine—the preppy pud—who always gets what he wants symbolizes the Yankees and Duckie—an “integrity punk”—who gets a consolation prize, is the Red Sox.) Another standout article is the how and why of the East/West coastal rivalries: “Group X always needs Group Y to buff its own sense of superiority. We are mind-haunted civilization; you are the physical beauty we’ll contemplate.” Which takes me back to my original thought. Sure, *Zisk* covers baseball, but really canvasses a much grander scale. Highly recommended. —Todd (Zisk, 801 Eagles Ridge Rd., Brewster, NY 10509)

(more zine reviews on <www.razorcake.com>)



(below) a comic by the Drunken Master, Kiyoshi Nakazawa, <drunkenmasterzine@sbcglobal.net>

SADDAM HUSSEIN CLONE and GEORGE BUSH CLONE



NAKAZAWA

9/12



When you see a chapter in a conspiracy book opened with a quote from the *X-Files*, just skip to the next available chapter that isn't opened with one.

—Chris Devlin

924 Gilman

compiled by Brian Edge, 400+ pages

Do you really want to sit there and read eighty some odd essays about “How I got into punk rock?” Well, if you are like me, then the answer is a straight and simple no. This is unfortunate because even with my humble East Coast knowledge, I know that 924 Gilman St. is an important club, no matter what subcategory you like to label yourself. Whether you view it as a shithole home for elitist ideals or the voice of change that a drunk and jaded scene badly needed, it’s still a landmark. A DIY club that tried to cut out all the bullshit that plagued (and unfortunately still does plague) the punk scene.

The idea of compiling a whole book of essays on a club sounds a lot better than the reality. It’s really not the compiler’s fault, either; I’m positive Brian Edge went into this with the best intentions. The book really would have been more interesting if the essays were more varied. Most of them follow the same basic format of “I was in (high school/college)... I discovered punk (insert date)... I started (working at/going to) Gilman... I left because (insert reason).” This leads to the reading of the same stories from every generation of kids that worked there over the years. After awhile, I had to skip essays because after skimming it I realized I was rereading almost the exact same thing that was said in the previous one.

There weren’t even that many references to the bands that have played there. If more of the people at least talked about their favorite show, it would have been better. I don’t care about who helped mop the place up or took out the trash. It’s great that they get the mention they deserve, but I want to hear about the Reagan Youth show on 8/22/87 or any of the other shows that were teasingly listed at the end of the book. Give me interesting band and show stories! Show me pictures! I wasn’t there! I was like five years old and living in a shitty NJ suburb! Tell me why I suck for missing this stuff! I understand that the point was to hear about the club from the people who worked it and made it what it is, but you can’t cut out all the juicy bits.

There are a few notable essays outside of the ones from key players like Brian Edge and Tim Yohannon, though. Some people included artwork along with their essays, others had photos of the graffiti, and others just trashed the place for the ideals it held and still holds today. It gave you more of an idea of the personality of the place and reminds you of what sets it apart from everywhere else in the world. And Gilman St. is another world—the first DIY club run by the scene that supports it.

The book acts almost like a road map for starting a DIY club of your own. It has all the legal documents they prepared, how they kept cops from harassing them, etc. Some of the meeting notes are even in there. In many ways it’s inspirational. This is the best service the book does. It opens your eyes to how hard it is to keep a place like this going and shows what can be accomplished. I also get the feeling that a lot of people who have worked in this place never got much respect from the patrons there. So in that regard, this book will probably drum up some well-deserved respect for them.

In this aspect, the book isn’t a failure. It’s just boring. The lack of interesting stories about the bands that played there, the scene celebrities that have gone there, or any of that stuff is refreshing, but at the same time dull. Maybe that was also the point. Read a book about CBGBs and you’ll read about the Talking Heads and Blondie. Read a book about Gilman St. and you’ll read about taking out the trash. —Christopher Larsen (Maximum Rock’n’roll, PO Box 460760, SF, CA 94146)

Against All Enemies: Inside America’s War on Terror

by Richard A. Clarke, 304 pgs.

When it was first published last August, *Against All Enemies* was known primarily as the book that called Bush’s Iraq invasion a stupid and expensive distraction from the more important fight against al Qaeda and Islamic terrorism and for accusing Bush and Condoleezza Rice of being asleep at the wheel in the weeks before the World Trade Center attacks. It is certainly those things, but it is also a ripping good read. Classifying the book as a Bush bash is to way oversimplify, but it does provide raw data for those who like their rants against the occupier of the Oval Office to be fact-based (as opposed to the currently popular type of ranting: the faith-based outburst).

Quite surprisingly, Clarke offers an unexpectedly fascinating look at the U.S. national security apparatus, how the CIA, FBI, Secret Service, NSC (the intelligence agency within the White House) and the NSA (the spy group within the Pentagon) work together (or not, as is often the case) to thwart terrorism and protect the public. Who knew bureaucracy could be so gripping?

Against All Enemies is primarily a history of counter intelligence activities in the last couple decades—a task Clarke is well suited for as he’s been dealing with terrorism and counterintelligence issues since Reagan was in office. He recounts how al Qaeda first came to be known to the intelligence community, and covers in depth some of the major security “events” of the ‘90s: how close we were to war with Iran in 1996 (pretty close), the bombing of the Atlanta Summer Olympics, the Clinton Administration’s response to the 1998 al Qaeda bombings of U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya and Clinton’s response (which the press wrote off as a Monica-diversion and Clarke argues was a sincere effort to take out bin Laden when they thought they had a clear shot), and how the Terrier-like tenacity of Clinton’s National Security Advisor helped prevent a major terrorist attack al Qaeda planned for the Millennium. He has little good to say about the CIA, Donald Rumsfeld or Condi Rice, and spells terrorist number one’s name Usama.

The chapters are sober, carefully narrated and rational, full of facts and interesting but relatively low-key first person accounts. The careful setup makes for much greater impact when the last two chapters are delivered. It’s here that Clarke launches an attack of the Bush Administration’s handling of everything pre- and post-9/11, and details the sheer lunacy and wastefulness of invading Iraq and calling it part of the “War on Terror” (this from a man whose solution to most problems was “How soon can we send in the bombs?”). These chapters are rational, and thoughtful too, but coming at the end of a book that was pretty moderate in its criticism, and laced as it is with a sense of righteous rage, it’s the equivalent of a roadside bomb on Pennsylvania Avenue: satisfying for the Bush detestors among us, but pretty frightening in its implications.

Clarke has no sense of humor (which actually makes the book kind of funny at times), hasn’t a shred of humility, and is possessed of a numbingly disheartening worldview in which military solutions are the only solutions, but his sincerity, commitment, and expertise are obvious. The events he recounts are at times frustrating and outrage-inducing, and his conclusions slightly sickening, but the book is nothing if not a great read. —Sara Isett

Black Fag

by Shane Allison, 25 pgs.

As you may have guess by the title, Shane Allison is a gay black dude. He’s a bit like Allen Ginsberg in the sense that both of them write poems that carry a sexually confrontational attitude. Stylistically, Allison is a little more direct than Ginsberg. He gets right into his narrative poems about sniffing underpants, having sex with anonymous men, being a little boy and exposing himself to another little boy, and giving blow jobs. In fact, he writes a lot about “sucking dick.” You get the feeling that it’s kind of a hobby for him. He even writes a poem about how much he’d like to suck his own dick. He’s really put a lot of thought into it (he wonders, “If my dick tastes like chicken or steak”). Allison’s raunchiness, though, goes beyond ordinary shock value and comes across as a well-developed aesthetic. As he says in the poem “If I Were an Editor of a Literary

Magazine,” “make it stank and rank.” Beyond the stank and rank, Allison has an openness that’s all too rare. As James Baldwin once wrote, “If we did not understand what was happening to men and women who shared all the horrors but none of the privileges of our civilization, then we did not know what was happening to ourselves.” When Allison writes about getting herpes from sucking a guy’s dick in a state park, he dangles the horrors of his life out there like a raw nerve. When he lists all the things he could never tell his mother, he’s more forthright with his readers than most people are with their best friends. And even if you’re not black or gay, understanding Allison’s life will give you a little insight into your own. —Sean (Future Tense, PO Box 42416, Portland, OR 97242)

Carnet de Voyage

by Craig Thompson, 224 pages

For Craig Thompson, a sketchbook is a travel diary and every situation is an opportunity to draw. *Carnet de Voyage* is a look back at his two-month jaunt to Europe and Morocco in early 2004. At first, it seemed kinda whiney. He often complains of loneliness and burnout, and I kept thinking, “This guy’s in Europe for free and he’s complaining?” But as the book went on, I got more of a feel for where he was coming from and it didn’t bother me. That’s the thing with books like this. You start off apprehensive, but then you get sucked into everything in the guy’s life and you feel like you know him, sort of.

That said, fuck this fucking cliffhanger ending. I read the *whole book* of him talking about how lonely he is and then when he finally meets a great lady, the fucking book ends two pages later. Like I said, I started off apprehensive and now I gotta know what happens.

Art-wise, he’s got an amazing eye for detail and since it’s a sketchbook, almost all of the drawing are freehand and off-the-cuff, which makes it even more amazing. The drawings of Spanish architecture made my head spin. Another thing that endeared it to me is that he’s very self-effacing. He draws everybody else as very dramatic and beautiful, but draws himself as sort of an awkward caricature, and when he feels out of place, he draws himself with a piece of hay sticking out of his mouth talking like a slack-jawed yokel.

I enjoyed this book, but Craig, if you’re reading this, what happened with the girl from Switzerland? —Josh (Top Shelf Productions, PO Box 1282 Marietta, GA 30061)

The Complete Peanuts, 1953-1954

by Charles M. Schultz, 325 pages

Bill Watterson was right not to license his comic strip *Calvin and Hobbes* for animated specials or merchandise. He feared that the essence of the irreverent six-year-old he created would be lost in the merchandising empire his syndicate proposed. This is what happened to *Peanuts*, at least until a collection (now in its second volume) of the early strips reminded us of its original spirit.

I first met the *Peanuts* gang in 1979, when I arrived at my American cousin’s house from Nicaragua. *Peanuts* characters lived as patterns on her bed sheet and pillows, and her scruffy Woodstock doll slouched around the house with a limp neck. On Sundays, my grandfather and I would split his Spanish newspaper—he’d take news and sports, and give me the entertainment pages and the comics. I’d bypass the Spanish version of *Peanuts*, which lost considerable charm in its translation as *Rabanitos*, literally, “the little radishes.” With the exception of the Christmas special with the pitiful holiday tree, the animated *Peanuts* didn’t hold my attention either. In short, Snoopy and his friends were little more than a “sno-cone machine” brand.

Yet long before *Peanuts* was a brand, it was magic. While much has been written about the pathos and the keenly developed psychology of the characters, I can’t get over how much action Schultz could fit inside a five-inch-by-five-inch panel. Comic strip artists, Watterson among them, have complained that the incredibly shrinking newspaper column inch reduced strips to talking heads. If this was a problem for Schultz, you’d never know it from the amount of movement in his strips. Characters exchange candy while sitting on sidewalk curbs, they lounge on rain drains, they dive for marbles, and share umbrellas in the rain—against backgrounds that complement but don’t overwhelm. In “The Croquet Game,” a particularly inspired Sunday strip, Schulz manipulates perspective and angles to put us in a vibrant playground—where the characters’ comedic business reflect their personalities, and we can hear their squealing, running, and the “klunking” of the croquet ball. Some of the funniest strips are the silent ones, in which there are no speech balloons to distract us from Linus’s resourcefulness or Schroeder’s creativity.

Sure, we see ourselves in the characters. In this edition, we may identify with Pig Pen, who is introduced, the short-lived character Charlotte

Braun, or any of the other regulars. We may even see sides of ourselves we’re not so crazy about: “Lucy,” I’ve been called when I’m at my fussiest. (You have to believe me: a sandwich needs a mustard happy face, with cheese on the mustard side, and must be diagonally cut in fourths or else the flavors vary chaotically from bite to bite.)

Schultz once wrote that what made Watterson’s cartoons admirable were simply that they were “fun to look at.” So are his. That’s as much a part of what has made both the strip—and the brand (first used by Kodak in 1955)—successful for more than fifty years, whether as *Peanuts* or *Rabanitos*. —Karla Pérez-Villalta (\$28.95, Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way, Seattle, WA 98115, <www.fantagraphics.com>.)

Disposable:

A History of Skateboard Art

by Sean Cliver, 224 pages

The year was 1988. Skateboard company Powell Peralta placed an ad in *Thrasher* magazine looking to hire an artist. Skaters were asked to submit their art in hopes of being hired. I did. I can’t remember what the drawings were that I sent, but I distinctly remember sending my submissions and never hearing back from them. I loved the freedom and rebellion that skating created. I loved being frowned down upon by peers and adults alike, but most of all I loved the art. I would spend hours upon hours recreating all of my favorite graphics on every desk and schoolbook within reach. There was something special about 10” x 30” canvasses that were created to be destroyed.

Sean Cliver also submitted his art to Powell Peralta. The big difference between us was that he actually got the job. After working as an artist in the skateboard industry for the better part of twenty years, he has managed to create his most exquisite piece yet: this book.

Disposable plays out in two parts. To begin with, Cliver tells his story. From Powell to World Industries, this guy has stories! It gives an amazing look at the inner workings of the skate world in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s. The second part is an encyclopedia of some of the most inspirational artwork ever created. Full color pictures of boards litter every page, making it almost impossible to tear your eyes away to read the text. Cliver managed to talk to nearly everyone who has meant anything to skateboard art. Humpston, Templeton, Lucero, Blender, Pushead... the list goes on and on. It is scary how thorough this tome is. Hilarious and revealing, the anecdotes from artists and skaters compliment the photos perfectly. If you have ever been involved in skateboarding, you need to have this book. It’s as simple as that.

As for my art submissions, I just like to think that the reason they didn’t contact me was because it would have been a big legal hassle to hire a fourteen-year-old Canadian... Yeah, that’s it. —Ty Stranglehold (www.disposablethebook.com)

G.O.P.D.O.A.

by Jay Brida, 181 pgs.

I read this book cover-to-cover during a particularly grueling flight. Something was wrong with the plane. It had to be serviced. It was a few hours late leaving. I missed a connection and had to wait for a new flight. I spent basically twenty-four hours in transit that day. Luckily, for a few of those hours, I had this book to read. *G.O.P.D.O.A.* is a crime novel for Bush-hating punk rockers. Being a Bush-hating punk rocker myself, I enjoyed this book. It’s not terribly deep or literary, but it’s not intended to be. It’s pulp, but it’s good to see a little bit of pulp wrestled away from the right-wing nut jobs like Tom Clancy and from the dumbass lawyers like John Grisham and put back into the hands of the type of people who Dashiell Hammett wrote for. *G.O.P.D.O.A.* centers around Flanagan, a hard drinking employee of a Brooklyn political boss. Flanagan gets wrapped up in a plot surrounding the Republican National Convention in New York in 2004. Flanagan wakes up from an alcoholic blackout to find that bigger fish have been dropped into his little pond and a feeding frenzy surrounds him. His boss gets killed. His girlfriend gets another girlfriend. His organization is in tatters. His car is destroyed (with his favorite Ramones album in it [which, he loses points for whining over *It’s Alive* instead of, say, *Leave Home* or *Rocket to Russia*, but still, it’s the Ramones]). Everything is falling apart. In the midst of all this, Flanagan stays drunk, acts like a bit of an asshole and a bit of a hero, and barely stays alive. Author Jay Brida has obviously spent a good deal of time watching movies like *Miller’s Crossing* and *The Big Lebowski*, and at times *G.O.P.D.O.A.* reads like an updated version of *The Glass Key*. So it’s not totally original, but I like the movies and books that he’s ripping off. And if you’re looking for a fun read, *G.O.P.D.O.A.* is exactly that. —Sean (Contemporary Press, <www.contemporarypress.com>)



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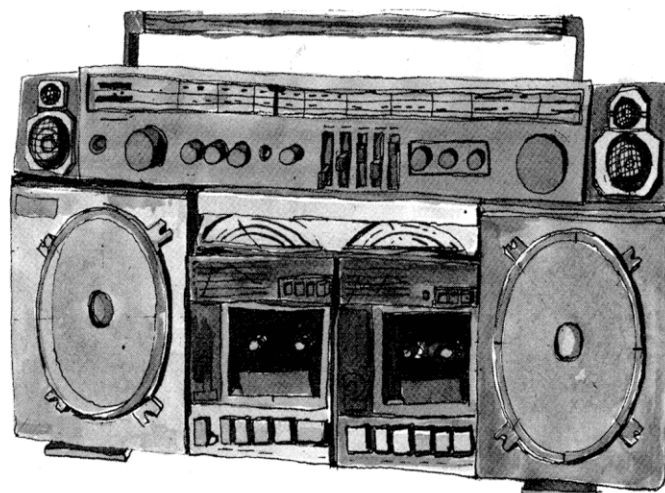
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**Inside the Shadow Government:
National Emergencies and the Cult of Secrecy**
by Harry Helms

I'm a real soft sell when it comes to conspiracy theories. It's not that I necessarily believe them to be factual. It's more an admiration for the author's ability to take so many dispersed ideas and tie them together in a single coherent plan that may or may not be laid before us.

That being said, I have a couple of problems with *Inside the Shadow Government*. First, just because some government asshole writes a report in which he says it would be a good idea for the military to take a stronger hand in quelling civilian uprisings doesn't mean it's going to happen. I've met plenty of people who spend their evenings polishing their "guns," hoping the government is foolish enough to try to interfere with their gun polishing activities. Second, enough with the fucking *X-Files* already. It

she won't cross, and she never once comes across as a victim. Imperato worked only as a phone sex operator, so she was removed from the immediate dangers of prostitution and the dominatrix business. This allows her to be more thoughtful and funny. The situations that Tea gets into are far dicier. There's a real sense of danger to her life. She doesn't write herself out to be a victim, but she gets into situations beyond her control. Tea doesn't romanticize her prostitution, either, but she does cut out a lot of the day-to-day difficulties that I'd imagine go along with this line of work. As you may expect, men don't come across well in this book. Very few of the characters in this book come across as someone you'd want to hang out with. I guess that's just the nature of the subject matter. Accompanying Tea's stories are some amazing illustrations by Laurenn McCubbin. Every page of the book is illustrated beautifully. At times, I found that I'd quit reading and just look at the illustrations and wonder

It's not all back-stabbing and pouring poison in the ear of your adversaries,
but it's not all nicey-nice, let's-all-get-along-isms, either. Sword and dove.
Grenades and hugs. Bloody knuckles and reacharounds.

wasn't that good of a TV show and nobody saw the movie. When you see a chapter in a conspiracy book opened with a quote from the *X-Files*, just skip to the next available chapter that isn't opened with one.

Those are the fairly minor flaws in what is otherwise a pretty good conspiracy book. It has a good section on subjects like the militarization of the "war on drugs" and another on the corporations that do the work our government can't do legally. For those of you familiar with labor history, today's Wackenhut Corporation makes yesterday's Pinkertons (which, since 1999, has been part of a Swedish company called Securitas) look like the Girl Scouts. Wackenhut employees are some scary (and evil) motherfuckers. Seriously.

For the uninitiated, this may be as good place to start as any since it covers many of today's most popular conspiracy theories including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (and the undisclosed number of concentration camps they have built), Area 51, and the omnipresent black helicopters. For those already familiar with some of these players, the three indices covering the pertinent executive orders signed by presidents since Roosevelt are useful for starting your own paranoid research.

It's books like this that make me glad I don't pay taxes, and suddenly give me the urge to polish my "gun." —Chris Devlin (Feral House; <www.feralhouse.com>)

Madness and Retribution

By Juliette Torrez, 77 pgs.

Juliette Torrez has been floating around underground writing circles for more than a decade. She's performed spoken word on the second stage of Lollapalooza. She's set up poetry slams and spoken word festivals and all kinds of events in several cities. She's helped pave the way for a generation of spoken word artists and poets, and finally the poems she's been performing for years are published in this collection, *Madness and Retribution*. In some senses, you can tell that these poems need to be read aloud. They have a rhythm to them. There's music in the words. There's also a conversational tone underlying the poems that insures you get at least some meaning from them on the first read. Torrez has a worldview gained from years of travelling, bouncing from town to town, drifting in and out of scenes, and this perspective rings true in the various poems she dedicates to various cities or people she's known along the way. All in all, *Madness and Retribution* is the perfect book of poetry for people who think they don't like poetry. Also, I have to mention, there's an awesome Mark Ryden painting on the cover. —Sean (Manic D Press, PO Box 410804, SF, CA 94141)

Rent Girl

By Michelle Tea, 239 pgs.

Rent Girl is a memoir of Michelle Tea's days as a prostitute. In a series of quick vignettes and longer stories, she writes about how she got into the industry, discusses the highs and lows, and finally emerges wiser from the whole experience. Her writing style is very direct. Her description of the events are vivid. She definitely has a poet's way of telling a story without wasting words. It's hard to read *Rent Girl* and not compare it to two other books written about punk rock women in the sex industry: *I Was a Teenage Dominatrix* by Shawna Kenney and *Dirty Money* by Ayn Imperato. All three books are excellent, but for different reasons. Kenney has an intelligent distance to her work. There are well-defined lines that

how she could do so much with shades of black and red. It's dazzling. Long after I was finished reading the stories, I kept going back to the illustrations. McCubbin has a talent for drawing faces. You could flip through this book and understand most of the story by just reading the facial expressions from page to page. Tea's stories are interesting, but McCubbin's illustrations make this book worth the hefty cover price (\$24.95). —Sean (Last Gasp, 777 Florida St., SF, CA 94110)

Wake Up and Smell the Beer

by Jon Longhi

In this book, the reader is introduced to the drug-induced prophets of San Francisco in the '80s, who lived way, way out on the fringe. Longhi has experienced a ton of strange little moments that prove life and drugs in San Francisco are more unreal than any fiction could hope to be.

Some finer moments: The Mohawk toupee. A hundred thousand dollar, amphetamine-induced credit card spending spree across the west. A sex toy entitled "The Manhammer." Getting moped-jacked. A drunk, vagrant Santa. And finally, a performance artist who operates under the concept of "life as art," and takes it to every extreme imaginable.

The irony here is that the episodes in this book occur in a rapid succession of frames that nearly mirror the experience of doing line after line of speed. It makes for some fast and furious fun, in the midst of the apocalypse of career drug use.

When it comes to employment, I usually root for the underdog. But in one of Longhi's stories about a book distribution company, you'll be rallying around the employer who hires the employee from hell. This benevolent ex-hippie gives a struggling, down and out guy a chance by offering him a job. He gives him an inch. Hell, he gives him a yard. What he gets in return is an employee who does all but burn the place to the ground. Ayn Rand would be chuckling in her grave.

Overall, I wanted more plot and dialogue, and for the glimpses of the individual characters to be strung together into a larger story. Some brief descriptions here are so vivid they stand alone as statements of the characters' personalities. I liked hearing about the "interpretive" artist who wore neon leisure suits and taped Styrofoam cups all over his body. I want to know and discover more about who's inside that crazy suit. At times I was left feeling like I was given an introduction to a story I was never going to fully hear, or seen an interesting person at a party I'd never get to really meet.

I enjoyed the deeper moments of the *Wake Up and Smell the Beer*, where Longhi talks about his marriage and wedding party blow out. I wanted more of this depth throughout the book. Nonetheless, there are many highly entertaining moments here, and the book makes for a hilarious read. It's the cure for a boring bus ride or slow afternoon at work. —Ayn Imperato (Manic D. Press, PO Box 410804, SF, CA 94141)

Wake Up... You're Liberal!:

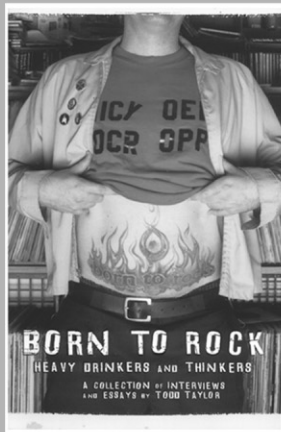
How We Can Take America Back from the Right

by Ted Rall, 315 pgs.

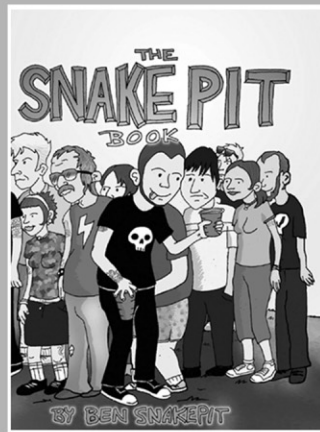
In no small way, Ted Rall has written an updated version of Machiavelli's *The Prince* for progressives. Politics is an ugly, messy business that has functioned in much the same manner for hundreds of years. The 16th century Italian political tactician Nicolò Machiavelli pulled no punches in mapping out a plan on how to get his political

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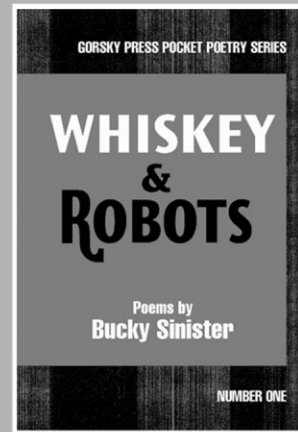
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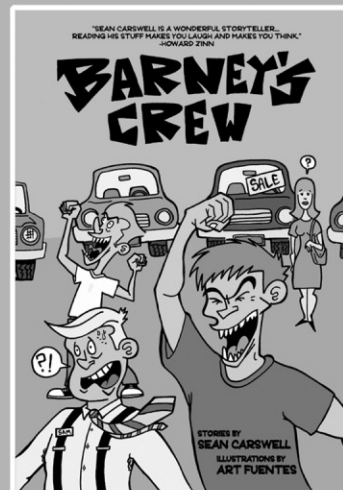


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candidate to gain and retain power. People who haven't read *The Prince* tend to cling to a *Cliff's Notes* version of the negatives, like "being feared is better than being loved" and "a prince wishing to keep his state is very often forced to do evil." Yet, what people often skim over in *The Prince* are its balancing points, points that involve a greater understanding of political situations that urge those in power to "consider issues with careful, moderate consideration," and that being merciful, trustworthy, kind, and honest are virtues that a successful politician should extol. It's not all back-stabbing and pouring poison in the ear of your adversaries, but it's not all nicey-nice, let's-all-get-along-isms, either. Sword and dove. Grenades and hugs. Bloody knuckles and reacharounds.

There are many elements in *Wake Up* that are missing in many political books being written today. It's funny. It's blunt. It's well-researched. All true. But more than that, Ted Rall just seems like a guy with his head on straight. His tone often reminds me of a contemporary Mark Twain—tons of common sense and common decency, a deep knowledge of what he's writing about, and an innate sense of right and wrong. What's also refreshing is that although he's definitely leaning towards the left, he's nowhere near being a robot for the Democratic Party. What comes across in these pages, loud and clear, is that he wants a better America, not just a battle plan for the Left to regain control of it. Rall provides many details of the ignominies America's facing right now, such as Tyco International, "previously based in New Hampshire, 'moved'—actually, opened a post office box and paid a small fee—to Bermuda in order to save more than \$400 million in taxes during 2001 alone."

Rall laments that we're currently in a two-party stranglehold in America, wishing that, "Americans would have as many options at the voting booth as they do at the supermarket, where you can pick from any of a dozen brands of clear dishwashing liquid." Yet, he understands that change to this system has to come within certain bounds. As he puts it, "historical precedent indicates that we probably won't be moving to a system of proportional representation any time soon."

Wake Up, much like Machiavelli's urgent plea to Lorenzo de' Medici to become prince in order to save Italy, is Ted Rall's battle call to liberals all across America. Be forewarned, few feelings are spared and liberals' cages are rattled while drafting out a game plan to regain control of American politics. The book watersheds around a simple, open-ended question—"Why are Democrats such pussies?" which is followed with, "Lefties sit around ripping out each other's lungs over insipid semantics, [while] the Right is taking over the world." Make no mistake, Rall isn't merely baiting nor is he a closet Republican, secretly termiteing into liberals' houses. He's acutely aware of the limitations of the Left, which stems from tribalism being its defining feature. (This echoes a point made by Howard Zinn. There are literally thousands of liberal groups, organizations, and independent media outlets that aren't even aware one another exists, let alone coordinate a collective, national effort.) Due to all of these groups working independently of one another most of the time, when they do bump into one another, anxiety often arises. Although fighting for the same basic principles, the Left has been so splintered by so many divergent agendas.

Rall doesn't stop there. This is a bulletpoint most people will have a difficult time accepting, but remember this is for correcting America's political ship, not personal relationships. "To be progressive, after all, is to be tolerant. Polite. Understanding," Rall posits. "Fuck that... Liberals are damn near paralyzed by tolerating all the kooks, nuts, and half-wits who curse them with their presence every time they see that we're meeting somewhere to plan something." Rall's not suggesting a blank check for you to be a dickweed. He's merely reiterating another one of Machiavelli's sentiments. "A wise man ought always to follow the paths beaten by great men, and to imitate those who have been supreme." Stepping on the toes of someone who's not really contributing to the greater good is a small price to pay for a stronger, more unified front.

Another point that Rall pleads for the Left to learn "is simple yet important. When politics intersects with an infotainment culture, style frequently matters more than substance. It's unfortunate, but it's reality." I'll admit that when the president—or any politician—lies, I get steamed. Parts of me want to still believe in human decency. Accountability. We live in a world dominated by TV. If you look good doing something, you'll probably win the battle, even in politics. On Thanksgiving 2003, in a perfectly played public relations coup, Bush secretly flew into Baghdad International Airport to serve American troops. In both print and on TV, Bush is holding a perfect-looking, golden brown turkey and emanates a rock-solid image of security and unflappable strength in a time of battle. Administration officials later noted that "Bush picked up a decoration, not a serving plate." They didn't want George to struggle with the weight of a real bird. You see, it's not important that Bush may be weak. It's impor-






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tant that he *looks* strong and exudes confidence, even if it's just a prop, a piece of delicious-looking plastic.

This is far from an isolated event. On a national level, Bush claims to be fiscally conservative—a cornerstone of the Republican platform—for smaller government, and less federal meddling. Yet, in the same breath, with the formation of the Department of Homeland Security, he created "the largest new federal bureaucracy since the 1970s." Then he goes and racks up the highest deficit this nation has ever known. Republicans, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, still wave the flag of being misers and Democrats are doing a bad job of calling them on their shit. How can this disparity—one among leagues—go virtually unquestioned? *Wake Up* provides the answer by studying the blueprint.

The blueprint's fairly well known. Besides money, party discipline and a narrow focus drives a successful party. Rall contends that these "are the key components to any party's rise to power," components that the Democrats largely lack and Republicans have in spades. Party discipline. It's inconceivable that Bush will appoint a Democrat to his cabinet or propose them serving on the Supreme Court, yet when Clinton took his oath of office, he immediately appointed right-wing Republican, David Gergen, as key political advisor. Republicans move as one. Republicans repeat simple catch phrases over and over again. It's just like a PR campaign for underarm deodorant: make it simple, make it catchy, repeat endlessly, and people will start believing what they hear. Rall asserts, and I believe him, that "GOP victories came as a result of effective strategizing, not merely, as they claim, from pushing good ideas." They know how to sell. They researched, then directly marketed to their party extremely well. Democrats didn't and America didn't like the smell of their party, didn't have catchy one-line phrases to zing back to Republicans, and ultimately lost another election.

What happens when someone offers a dissenting view to the Republican party? Most often, they aim their "wrath carefully and to attack... like a sniper, with laser-like accuracy and relentlessness." As hard as this is to swallow or to adopt a defeatist attitude, and instead of merely loathing these practices, Rall advises, "Do not scoff, grasshopper. Study and emulate." It's a difficult—but invaluable—piece of advice. Do we want to remain nice and courteous, on a national political level, when we're being shredded and discarded or do we want to fight back by using their most effective weapons against them?

I haven't suddenly felt like giving up since November's election, and after reading *Wake Up*, I've just found another entire bandoleer of mental ammo, am locking and loading, and am digging in for the next four years. I'm feeling politically meaner all the time and think Rall would agree with Machiavelli on this one: "a man who wishes to act entirely up to his professions of virtue soon meets with what destroys him among so much that is evil." —Todd (Soft Skull Press, 71 Bond St., Brooklyn, NY 11217)

What the Hell Am I Doing Here?

by Abram Shalom Himmelstein, 128 pgs.

Abram Shalom Himmelstein, one of the authors of *Tales of Punk Rock Nothing*, had a girlfriend who cheated on him. For the next few days, all he could think was, "She cheated on me." He wished he had a t-shirt that said this so everyone would understand why his mind wasn't fully focused on the tasks at hand. This led to an idea: he'd buy white t-shirts and fabric pens, tell his "she cheated on me" story to different groups, and have them make their own t-shirts advertising their deepest feelings. Himmelstein photographed the shirts and the people wearing them. He collected about a hundred or so photos. The result was *What the Hell Am I Doing Here?* It's a touching photo essay of ordinary people at racetracks, in bars, in restaurants, in schools, and around their neighborhoods showing what's on their mind. The slogans run from the funny (one woman made a shirt that said, "Can I PLEASE have a decent bowel movement today?!!") to the hopeful (a neighborhood kid with "The next NBA MVP" written on his shirt) to the succinct (a young woman with a "Fuck Men" shirt) to the heartbroken ("He already has a girlfriend and it ain't me") to the goofy ("Smirk is a Jerk"). Reading the slogans is little like reading poems. You start to wonder about the interpretations (when she says "fuck men," what exactly does she mean?), you wonder about the lives of other people (what's up with the girl in the "Trainwreck" shirt?), and you realize how rarely we make any real connections with the people around us. It's a simple concept, but something to keep you scratching your head. *What the Hell Am I Doing Here?* is something that belongs on toilet tanks everywhere. —Sean (Garrett County, 828 Royal St. #248, New Orleans, LA 70116)

Where Handstands Surprise Us

edited by Mickey Hess and Mike Smith, 97 pgs.

This anthology of short fiction (plus a few poems) documents a reading series in New Albany, Indiana. Judging from the writing here, it must be a pretty fun series. Most of the authors are pretty much unknown. I suspect that some of them are still in college. Still, there are no stinkers in this collection. While some of the writing may be pretty raw, what it lacks in polish it makes up for in heart. And this is really what I'm after when I read short stories: a bit of honesty that comes from the gut. Among the writers you may know are Al Burian (*Burn Collector*) and Todd Dills (*2nd Hand Reader, For Weeks under the Umbrella*). Burian writes a story called "I'm Sorry I Fucked Your Girlfriend." Like most of Burian's stories, this one is about a guy who spends way too much time in his head while his body floats around semi-hipster circles. The title pretty much outlines the plot, and the story does turn out to be pretty funny. Dills does a "Week (+a Day) of Bombs," which is basically about you and me (embodied in two other characters) dealing with the violent bastards who rule the world, trying to figure out a way to fight it without repeating the mistakes that have already been made, and getting drunk on cheap beer. I've read a good bit of Dills work, and this story is among his best. My three favorites in the book are the two by editor Mickey Hess and one by Beth Thomas. I know nothing about Beth Thomas, but she wrote this really heartfelt story about two young girls dealing with the death of their youngest sister. The story has a weird humor to it and does a good job of never directly addressing the sadness. These two elements combine to make the story complex and bittersweet. I do know stuff about Mickey Hess. I toured with him about a year and a half ago. I read his book, *Big Wheel at the Cracker Factory*. He's one of the more talented underground writers publishing today. His two stories, "The Peace Lilly" and "Jimmy Frog's Jumpsuit," maintain his style of delivering intelligent, day-in-the-life stories with the timing of a stand-up comic. Other high points include stories about bumpjumping, little league, road trips, and so on. A very solid collection. Well worth the ten bucks. —Sean (Pitchfork Battalion c/o Mickey Hess, Indiana University Southeast, 4201 Grant Line Rd, New Albany, IN 47150)



Against Me!:

We're Never Coming Home: DVD

I was a little apprehensive having to review this. I really had no idea what this band really sounded like. I did not have a copy of the much-lauded *Reinventing Axl Rose* LP or a copy of their latest, *As the Eternal Cowboy*. I think I have a track here or there but can't recall them at the moment. So, I'm going in blind and feeling pretty green. While I have to admit that this is not in my realm of favorites, I do have a much greater appreciation for this band after watching this. This DVD takes a snapshot of their life during a one-month tour of the East Coast. You get to see performances of songs, the crowd's interaction, and their hijinks. I really enjoyed the interview portions. I was able to see beyond the music and hear the thoughts from the people who created this music. Also, the additional interviews of random people added insight. In a geeky way, I really liked to watch how much the crowd participated with their sets. It's always good to see a few hundred or so singing along word for word. The energy of the songs becomes so much more poignant. Another interesting sequence of events is that this chronicles their courting from the major labels. It's interesting to see how a band deals with that type of sit-

uation once they get more popular. In the end, they stayed where they were. My attention level never wavered and I watched it from start to finish. For an old curmudgeon like me to not get huffy and turn it off is a good thing. —Donofthedeath (Fat)

Anti-Flag, Death of a Nation: DVD

This is Anti-Flag's first ever DVD and a live one, at that. Don't say you don't know who they are. You either love this band or hate them. I know there are plenty of Anti-Flag haters out there. But would there even be haters if the band wasn't as good and hardworking as it is? I doubt it. Say what you want about them; they put on a great live show and come up with amazingly catchy songs with political agendas. If you're an online message board hater who would never be caught dead at an Anti-Flag concert because, you know, "they're sell-outs," but you secretly like them, this DVD is as much for you as it is for the die-hard regulars who frequent their shows and the fans across the globe who might never see them live. Scrambled Visual, who worked on the latest Anti-Flag music videos, put this DVD together and it's very well done. The DVD includes great animated menus featuring zombie George Dubya Nazis and men with TV heads. There are over twenty songs from various shows (ranging from small, intimate gigs to huge, packed, sold-out concerts) with fancy-schmancy multiple-camera angles, superb sound quality, and editing worthy of only the best live music videos and DVDs. For me, the coolest part of this DVD is not the one-hour live segment (is that Against Me! jumping around on stage, singing along to "Die for Your Government"?! Yeah!!), but rather the special features and extras. I don't know about you, but I hate and loathe buying a DVD only to find the "ultra special" features are the theatrical trailer and a French language track. Fuck that bullshit. If I'm paying over \$15 for a DVD, you better pack that shit to the brim! And packed to the brim this DVD is. There are two unreleased music videos, as well as the previously released one for "Turncoat," along with storyboards and a great "making-of" featurette of that video (you even get to see the band befriend a homeless man in Detroit and have him be part of the video—too cool). But wait, there's more: several montages, funny behind-the-scenes tour footage, a live radio show and an interview where the band skillfully answers questions all you haters have been dying to ask! Aside from all of these special fea-

tures and the amazing live footage, there is also a propaganda section for politically fueled fans. Kudos to A-F and Scrambled Visual for a job well done. This DVD rules. —Mr. Z (A-F)

Belt Fighting the Man, DVD

Rivethead, Toys That Kill, and Dillinger Four toured together in the summer of 2002. One of their friends (whose name is nowhere to be found on the DVD or its packaging) brought along a video camera and made a documentary about the tour. Filming punk rockers on tour has gotten old, and this type of video can only work if one of two things occur: either something extremely bizarre happens on tour, or all the bands on the tour are great. So *Belt Fighting the Man* works on the second criteria. All three bands have graced the covers of *Razorcake*. All three are among the best current punk rock bands. This video captures a few songs from each band, some drunken tour footage, funny bits (like the guys from Rivethead shoplifting forties), and about a dozen hidden features that I stumbled upon unwittingly, laughed about, then was unable to find again. The editing in this is funny in the sense that, sometimes you'll see a drummer hit a symbol but the song won't have a symbol crash at that point. Or the strumming on the guitar doesn't match the beat of the song. But who cares? This is punk rock. And what the filmmaker does very well is capture interesting angles and shoot the live performances in a way that does recapture a lot of the fun and energy of seeing these bands live. As far as punk videos go, I'd say *Belt Fighting the Man* is up there with the *Flipside* Minor Threat video. Both really capture the feel and personality of the bands well. Both are way more enjoyable than your standard live footage. And, to tell the truth, I prefer *Belt Fighting* to the Minor Threat video just because it's my generation and a scene I'm a part of up there on stage. —Sean (Redemption Value, 1101 26th Ave. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414)

Circle One, DVD

In 2002, surfer Strider Wasilewski almost died after being towed into a huge wave, wiping out, and getting pinned against the reef by the wave. *Circle One* loosely revolves around this incident in the sense that it starts and ends with the account of the wipeout. In between is some decent surfing footage by some of the best contemporary surfers: Peter Mel, Danny Fuller, and Kelly Slater. There is no single thread that ties this video together, though, and the footage is no better than anything you could download for free off of Surfline (www.surfline.com). There is a short segment in Puerto Rico that's pretty cool. Otherwise, it's just generic footage of good surfers riding good waves. —Sean (Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., LA, CA 90026)

GG Allin & The Murder Junkies:


Raw, Brutal, Rough & Bloody: DVD

Genealogically speaking, was GG Allin the spiritual outgrowth of Sid Vicious' famous bloodied nose at the Sex Pistols show in Texas in '78 when he whopped some cowboy in the head with his bass? Or can it even be said that there was anything that might be called "spiritual" about GG's enraged chimp act at all? Was GG—while his body was still able to convert various foodstuffs and alcohol into a slimy brown pudding suitable for slurping up and/or casting at horrified audience members—a modern day shaman or an alpha male nihilist with a poopy chip on his shoulder? Over the years I've pondered this question more than a mentally healthy person would, but I've never come up with a suitable answer. So was GG's butt-smear naked romp through various rock-'n'-roll dumps across America a sort of reworking of the pre-Taoist dance of Yu or merely a bloody mime routine serving only to extract badly needed attention from admission-paying homosapiens?

The quasi-famous ethnomethodologist and ladies' man Furnt Eggblaff, Ph.D. wrote in his *The Tao of GG: Atavistic Behavior as a Career Option*: "Actually, the safest place at any GG Allin show was behind a video camera. No matter how snarlingly animalistic his showboatings got, he never lost touch with his deep respect for the camera's ability to galvanize his legend." That doesn't quite answer my question, but it's a start. As brother Merle's vault of GG videos would indicate, GG did seem to attract cameras like a turd attracts flies—or maybe more like the way a Catholic Priest attracts little boys.

And therein lies part of the problem; while GG was, on one hand, a genuinely scary "trog" of a sociopathic human being, he was, on the other hand, very easy to poke fun at.

So maybe the time has never been more ripe, so to speak, for GG's battered legend to be propped up again, cocktail frank and all, if only for re-examination purposes. Because, while there have been, undoubtedly,

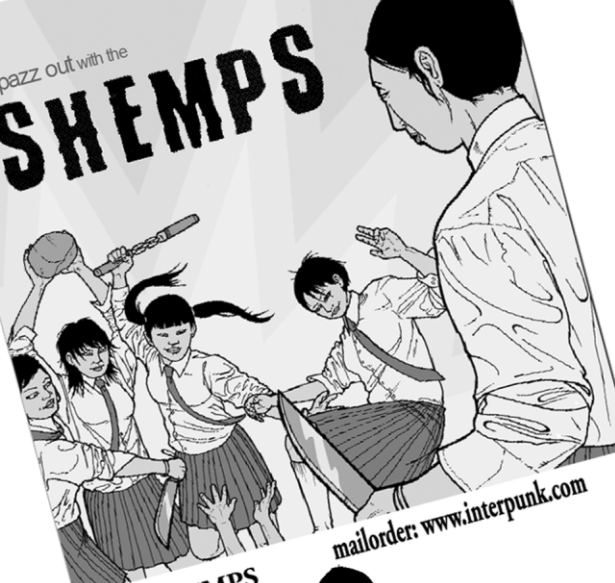


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pools of GG fandom teeming since his ignominious death, he has also been publicly dissed by everyone from one-time-admirer Adam Parfrey to the fratboy-dork editors at *Spin* magazine who tagged him a "wuss" and a "poo poo rocker." Even some of GG's staunchest supporters today wince at the notion that he went down like a dime-store rock star junkie instead of going out in a blaze of fury and glory, making good on his promise to off himself on stage and take out a few audience members with him. You gotta figure that gossip like that has to cut into Merle's video sales at least a little bit and that kind of thing can make it hard to scrape up rent money.

Be that as it may, *something* inspired Merle to dig into his archives recently and wrest from mists of obscurity the video footage of three vintage shows—San Diego, Chicago, and Atlanta—from the 1991 tour when our man GG was fresh out of the pokey and maybe a little more surly than usual. And now anyone, even my mom and dad who've never seen a *MRR* classified ad in their lives, can easily procure a copy of this wholesome entertainment and enjoy it in the comfort of their own home. And to that I say, in all sincerity, good for Merle. He seems to be a truly good guy and I don't begrudge him one little bit for bringing home the bacon.

As live GG footage goes this is some primo stuff. His entire bag of tricks is presented here: drinking his own urine; tugging his wee-wee; sucker punching audience members; opening his butt spigot and dropping some grayish-brown soft serve onto the floor, rolling in it, lapping it up, throwing it at the crowd; bashing big dents in his head with the microphone until he's a bloody mess; etc, etc, etc. And Merle, Dino and Chicken John—who often times get forgotten about in the whirling spectacle of bodily excretions—come across as a solid backup band that's crunchy and surprisingly tight.

Maybe the quirkiest part of the footage offered here is an interview with possibly the only woman who never wound up with her teeth knocked in and a patch of her hair yanked out as a direct result of allowing GG Allin to mumble and slobber on her bare breasts: GG's mom. Cupping a mug of what might be hot cocoa in her hands and looking comfy and cozy in a sweater she probably knit herself at sewing club, Ma Allin beams and gushes about little Kevin, who she describes as a "peaches and cream" adorable little baby. In fact, her golly-

gee, small-towny Every Mom persona seems like it was lifted right out of the script for David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*. Not far into the interview you start to wonder: is this a woman seized up in a never-ending hiccuping paroxysm of denial? Did she just board-up an entire part of her brain at a certain point, effectively keeping everything frozen at a certain soothing point in time, ala Eddie Gein and his fabled dead mother's bedroom? I mean, how far can you run with the old "boys-will-be-boys" platitudes when your apple-cheeked little darlings turned out to be GG and Merle Allin? If you didn't know any better you'd think she was talking about the Campbell Soup kids. But to be fair, brother Merle is, as anyone who's talked to him can tell you, disarmingly laid-back and—um, "normal"—for being GG Allin's kin. And maybe the Allin family's just an accepting and amazingly well-adjusted bunch of folks who don't lock the family freak away in the attic with a chain around his ankle and a doggy dish with water and a coffee can to crap in, in the corner. Whatever her state of mind, Ma Allin's somewhat creepy sunny disposition fails to shine any direct light on just why huggable little Kevin eventually turned into the social contusion known infamously as "GG Allin." It's only in the shadows of what she says—the passing and smiled-over references to her lit-

So was GG's butt-smears naked romp through various rock'n'roll dumps across America a sort of reworking of the pre-Taoist dance of Yu... ?

tle darlings being "naughty" and the strangely skated-over references to her religious kook husband—that we get any sense that this was possibly something more maladjusted than a simple Ward and June Cleaver household.

I suppose it all just adds yet another layer of uncertainty to the whole ugly ball of uncertainty that is the legend of GG Allin. And that's probably for the best. GG just wouldn't be as intriguing if he was so easily explained away. And while there's a point to be made that a healthy fear has been lost now that people can sit in their bathrobes, in their favorite easy chair, and watch GG without getting pelted with poop and bloody fists, the mere fact that he existed—and not so long ago—might be just enough to unsettle people a little bit and get them thinking. Or coming up with new poop jokes. —Aphid Peewit (Music Video Distributors, PO Box 280, Oaks, PA 19456)

Instant-Mix Imperial Democracy and Come September, Two Talks by Arundhati Roy, with Howard Zinn, DVD

This DVD is more powerful than solely an audio CD for one particular reason. For all of those who are convinced that voices of dissent against current international politics and corporations comes solely via wild-eyed potential terrorists with guns raised, I can't think of a less intimidating-looking human than Ms. Roy. Diminutive in size, soft spoken, and emanating a warmth, she looks harmless and easy going. When she speaks of America controlling the world's oil and thereby controlling the world's market, she does it with a poet's precision and a compelling directness. In doing so, she is one of most articulate, elegant dissenters who has stepped into the world arena in a long time. This DVD composes two talks, is around three hours long, and is basically a state of the world address for those concerned about the dark shadow cast on this world by global corporate interest and its crippling effects on one of the best inventions of modern time: democracy. If you're looking for a whiz-bang DVD with tons of special effects and computer-generated graphics, look elsewhere. If you're looking for the inspiration one woman can instill by just standing up and boldly telling it like it is in her own unique style, you can't get much better than Ms. Roy. —Todd (AK Press, 674-A 23rd St., Oakland, CA 94612-1163)

Kelly Slater: In Black and White, DVD

Kelly Slater is the best surfer alive. He's won six world titles and he does things on water that never before seemed humanly possible. When he was just starting to light up the pro-surfing circuit back in 1990, the clothing company that sponsors him made this documentary, *In Black and White*. It has some silly interviews with Slater and some pretty good surfing footage of Slater, Tom Carroll, Jeff Booth, and Ross Clarke-Jones. It's become kind of a cult favorite because it shows the legend when he was just starting to get big. Epitaph has recently re-released it on DVD. —Sean (Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., LA, CA 90026)

Punk Rock Holocaust: DVD

This is essentially a promo video for the Warped Tour, featuring footage of some of the bands that performed on the 2003 tour, tied

together with a pathetic gore-splattered "plot" involving a serial killer offing assorted band members and fans. Frankly, I haven't seen something punk related this asinine, this embarrassing, and this downright stupid and so chock full of poseurs since *Chips* and *Quincy* were on the air. This may be "punk rock" to the clueless masses that buy Blink 182 shirts at the mall, but to the rest of us, it's a sad reminder that most "straight" folk these days see punks not for the threat to societal mores they once were, but as a toothless, safe, alternative to more morally corrupting bands like Backstreet Boys. Avril Lavigne fans can rest assured; this waste of technology is right up your alley and is sailing right out of my window as we speak. —Jimmy Alvarado (Springman, PO Box 2043, Cupertino, CA 95015)

Real Mckenzie's: Pissed Tae th' Gills:

A Drunken Live Tribute to Robbie Burns: DVD

Robbie Burns—for those of you who don't know—was the Scottish poet who is most widely known for the New Year's Eve standard "Auld Lang Syne." But he was also known as a bloody-knuckled boozier. So who better to celebrate the man than a bunch of kilt-wearin' punkers?

This is mildly entertaining to watch from the couch. Like watching a Southern Culture on the Skids video or a Gwar film, this is probably much more enjoyable when you've found yourself pickled at the end of a pub crawl on St. Paddy's Day and stumble into a bar where you get to experience the band live and in the flesh. —Greg Barbera (Sudden Death)

Second Thoughts, DVD

Second Thoughts is a documentary about three surfers and their trip down to Indonesia. They decide that, rather than paying thousands of dollars to a charter boat to drive them around to various Indonesian islands, they'll pay a fishing boat fifty bucks to drop them off on one of those uninhabited islands. The fishing boat does, and the guys are pretty much on their own for a month. They live off of rice and noodles that they brought with them, as well as any fish they can catch and any water they can collect when it rains. In between, they surf some amazing waves. Times get rough over the course of the month. They run out of water. They run out of food. They have to kill their pet goat to survive. They suffer through some rough storms. They look rattier every day. The whole experience, though, looks fun as hell. Prior to watching *Second Thoughts*, I'd never heard of these three guys (Timmy Turner, Brett Swartz, and Travis Potter), but all three of them are world-class surfers. The waves they ride are big, tubing reef breaks with ten to twenty-foot faces. There is no camera crew. Most of the footage is shot by Turner himself. The rest is shot by whoever else is around to hold the camera. The camera angles are creative and original and sometimes had me scratching my head as to how they even pulled it off. Also, while they're out there, one of the charter boats stops by for a session. During the session, a photographer snaps a shot of Turner in a huge stand-up barrel, and Turner ends up on the cover of *Surfer* magazine. When Turner describes the session, he's excited to have been on the cover of *Surfer*, but you can also hear a bit of disappointment in his voice. Clearly this trip wasn't about acclaim or notoriety. It was about surfing in the purest sense. Turner narrates this documentary. He's got a stereotypical young surfer's voice, and he's not very articulate. This just adds to the charm of the movie. The whole thing is only about forty-five minutes long. I wish it were longer. Still, I have to say that this is best surfing movie I've ever seen that wasn't made by someone whose last name was Brown. —Sean (Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., LA, CA 90026)

Table Scraps Video Cuisine #1: DVD

A well made videozine here. It features interviews with All Girl Summer Fun Band, Punk Rock Karaoke, a very drunk dude from the Dropkick Murphys, assorted short films and animations, and live performances by the Vibrators, the Soviettes, the Crush, the Strike. Much of the live stuff is shot with a single camera, and the sound, while raw in some spots, is pretty clear. Can't say I was too enthused by the band selection (the Vibrators and Soviettes notwithstanding), but on the whole it was pretty entertaining. —Jimmy Alvarado (Table Scraps, PO Box 300033, Minneapolis, MN 55403)

